Instructional Supervision: The Policy-Practice Rift

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ABSTRACT: If school superintendents were polled as to the level of agreement between the behaviors outlined in school division policy manuals and actual behaviours in schools, one might expect them to respond that there was, in fact, a high level of agreement. In fact, in today's site-based managed schools, it seems critically important that the level of agreement be high since schools operated under this management philosophy often have a great deal of autonomy with less day to day contact with superintendents. This article relates the results of a recent study in which the perceptions of superintendents, principals, and teachers were analyzed and compared in order to determine the actual level of agreement between the practices for instructional supervision outlined in the school division's policy manual and the actual practice in the schools governed by those policies.

RESUME: Si l'on sondait l'opinion des superviseurs d'écoles sur l'écart entre le respect des règlements mentionnés dans la partie « école » du manuel de règlements et ceux réellement suivis dans les écoles, comme on pourrait s'y attendre, ils tomberaient presque tous d'accord. En fait, aujourd'hui, dans les écoles dirigées indépendemment, il paraît vraiment important de s'entendre depuis que les écoles régies par cette phylosophie managériale ont souvent de plus en plus d'autonomie car, de moins en moins de contacts avec les superviseurs. Cet article rapporte les résultats d'une étude récente dans laquelle les perceptions des superviseurs, des directeurs et des professeurs ont été analysées et comparées afin de déterminer la réelle variation entre les pratiques de surveillance éducative soulignées dans la partie réservée pour les écoles du

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manuel de règlements et la pratique courante dans les écoles gérées par ces règles.

The educational practice of instructional supervision appears to be a contentious issue in contemporary educational circles, and it has been characterized by shifting attitudes among researchers and educators alike. For example, Kauchak, Peterson, and Driscoll (1985), in their examination of attitudes surrounding instructional supervision, observe that many educators are very critical of current supervisory practice and of those individuals who perform the task. They state that "teachers view them [supervisory visits] as being perfunctory with little or no impact on actual teaching performance" (p. 2). Yet Jonasson (1993) suggests "if we wish to promote student learning in schools, we must invest time, money, and energies into the training and development of teachers [through regular instructional supervision]" (p. 19). Further, Glickman (1990), states that "we can think of supervision as the glue of a successful school" (p. 4).

Many school systems in Canada and the United States have begun to utilize the practice of decentralization, often referred to as site-based management (SBM). In fact, Oswald (1995) points out that "site-based management ... is one of the most popular strategies to come out of the 1980's [sic] school reform movement" (p. 1). Typically, the decision-making process according to site-based managerial practice allows a local manager (usually the principal) to make many of the day-to-day decisions (often in consultation with senior administrators) within his or her school (Brown, 1991). Proponents of site-based management often suggest that better decisions are usually arrived at due to the proximity of the decision maker to the problem. However, Hill and Bonan (1991) note, "decentralization [site-based management] means that the people closest to a problem have the opportunity to solve it, but it should not be assumed that they will have the necessary knowledge and resources [to do so]" (p. 17).

Principals are often guided in their decision making by a set of policies developed by school boards and senior administrators. These policies tend to define a school board's expectations in a

way that effectively controls the actions of the professional staff in virtually all areas of the day to day operation of a school system (Carver & Carver, 1996). As Guba (1984) pointed out, "varying interpretations of the word policy greatly affect how and where particular policies are created and implemented and, ultimately, whether their results are as intended" (p. 63). One must wonder to what extent the policies enacted in school systems are actually implemented by principals or experienced by target-groups (often teachers) as intended by the policy-making bodies (school boards).

The Problem of Definition

The literature concerning educational policy-making is rife with debate. It seems that the root of the difficulty for most of the writers is in developing an acceptable phrase that precisely captures the essence of policy. As Caldwell and Spinks (1988) suggest, "conceptually, there is lack of agreement on the meaning of the term 'policy' which is often defined too broadly ... or too narrowly" (p. 90). With the apparent indistinctness of the definition of policy, one might be tempted to forego the need to make policies at all. However, Cosh (1994) points out, "the primary reason for local school boards' existence ... [is] to provide strategic direction for school systems and to fulfill necessary oversight functions [or, make policies]" (p. 18).

There is a similar level of debate in the body of literature concerning instructional supervision. Zepeda indicated that many authors in the discipline of instructional supervision view the practice as "a main office accountability measure" (Zepeda & Ponticelli, 1995, p. 1) rather than as an exercise which has some intrinsic or educational value. In contrast, Tracy (1995) observed that "the common thread in much of the supervision in schools today is the intent to improve classroom instruction through the observation of classroom teaching, analysis of observed data, and face-to-face interaction between observer and teacher" (p. 320).

It is generally accepted that effective instructional supervision is essential for the improvement of instruction in a school. Glickman (1990) suggests that supervision can

> Enhance teacher belief in a cause beyond oneself ... promote teachers' sense of efficacy ... make teachers aware of how

> they complement each other in striving for common goals ... stimulate teachers to plan common purpose and actions ... [and] challenge teachers to think abstractly about their work. (p. 22)

While these stated benefits appear to be aimed primarily at teachers who perform their duties in a poor or mediocre fashion, "[supervision] intends to promote growth and change by helping teachers to experiment with new ideas" (Zepeda & Ponticelli, 1995, p. 1) and, as such, one may argue that all teachers can benefit from quality instructional supervision.

The key to effective instructional supervision from the point of view of both the teacher and the administrator, however, may be the clear articulation of the intended practices and procedures in a well-conceived policy and a well-trained supervisory staff. Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979) state "policy support is useless if not accompanied by political and managerial skill in utilizing available resources" (p. 465). In fact, Ellis (1986) states "if a teacher [supervisory] system is research-based, designed to improve instruction, and approached with a cooperative attitude by all parties, it can be an effective and dynamic agent for educational renewal" (p. 4).

Guba (1985), in his now classic work on the nature of effective policies, suggests that the term policy has meaning at three levels which he identified as "policy-in-intention [the domain of policy framers], policy-in-implementation [the domain of policy implementers], and policy-in-experience [the domain of policy target groups]" (p. 11). He posits that the levels of policy imply the domains or areas of administrative responsibility in which any policy exists. However, since "it is crucial to realize that the term policy does not denote a single concept" (Guba, 1985, p. 11), any individuals who make policy decisions, which appear to exist in these domains simultaneously, must consider and evaluate them as they go about the tasks of policy development.

The Study

In view of Guba's work, the author set out to investigate the attitudes and opinions of people in the three domains of policy (superintendents, principals, and teachers) in an urban Canadian school system. The purpose was to describe the intention,

implementation, and experience of the instructional supervision policy in that school division with a view to determining the level of congruence among the three domains of policy.

The study was designed to be a case-study of the intent, implementation, and experience of the instructional supervision policy in an urban Canadian school system. The particular case under study was a school division. "In order to test the generalizability of themes and patterns" (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 544), a multi-site approach was used in which one school was chosen from each of the three broad categories of schools existing within the school division – that is, an elementary school, a high school, and an associate school. The school system was chosen at random from among a number of possible locations for study and the schools were also chosen at random from the three general types of schools within the system.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study was conducted in three phases. First, semi-structured personal interviews were conducted with the three superintendents of education responsible for teacher supervision in the school system to establish and clarify the intentions of the supervisory policy (policy-in-intention). Next, semi-structured personal interviews with the principals of the three schools under study yielded data describing the processes used to implement the instructional supervision policy (policy-in-implementation). Finally, semi-structured personal interviews with three teachers in each school (2 tenured and 1 non-tenured) probed their experience of the supervisory policy in their schools (policy-in-experience). The transcripts from each respondent were subjected to a content analysis which led to comparison and contrast with the other transcripts in each respondent group.

The Context of the Study

The school system was a medium-sized urban Canadian school system with a student population of 15,000 ranging from Kindergarten to Grade 12. There were 40 schools in the system ranging in focus according to:

(5) grade level – elementary (Kindergarten to Grade 8) and high school (Grades 9 to 12),
(6) student population and demographics (associate schools – schools for troubled children or children of particular ethnic backgrounds), and
(7) program (fine arts and language immersion).

At the time of study, this school system employed 825 teachers and 400 support staff and was divided into three geographical areas with a superintendent responsible for the personnel and operations of the schools in each area.

Validity and Reliability

Member-checking (Gall et al., 1996) was conducted at each stage of the study by asking each respondent to verify, in writing, that the transcripts of their interviews were accurate. The use of pre-written questions and audio tapes in interviews was also suggested as a method of ensuring validity (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993, p. 400). In addition, to verify the analysis procedures, the researcher conducted interviews, verified content, and verified analysis procedures with one additional respondent who would be considered to be in a similar position within the school division studied but, who was not a study participant.

What Superintendents Said

The three superintendents identified ten basic intentions of instructional supervision which was divided into two categories: a) intended procedures, and b) intended outcomes (Table 1 provides an overview of superintendent perceptions).

Intended Procedures

All three superintendents prefaced their descriptions of intended supervisory procedures with the statement that they viewed instructional supervision to be a high priority. They indicated that they expected principals to consider supervision as a high priority and it was their belief that the principals did indeed make supervision a high priority in their schools.

All three superintendents emphatically identified the principals as the intended supervisors of teachers which was

consistent with the policy directive. They also stated that, while the principal may choose to delegate his or her supervisory responsibility to others, he or she was still ultimately responsible to ensure that it was conducted as intended.

One superintendent suggested that during the development of the policy there had been a deliberate attempt to separate the processes of supervision and evaluation. He stated, however, that he viewed them as being inextricably intertwined.

The superintendents indicated that the policy was based on Glatthorn and Holler's differentiated teacher evaluation model (1987). It required principals to allow teachers to choose from three additional supervisory options: collegial (peer), clinical (conducted by the principal using the Goldhammer model), and self-directed development. In addition, they indicated that principals were expected to use a closer form of supervision (conduct formal supervision on a more regular basis) with non-tenured teachers than with tenured teachers.

Table 1. Overview of superintendent perceptions regarding the intent of the supervisory policy

Superintendent Perceptions of:	SA	SB	SC
Policy Making Procedures Used by School Board	-initiative typically from director or superintendents	-continuous state of revision	-lit. review completed -put into policy
Development of Current Supervisory Policy	-principals were mandated to discuss policy with their staffs	-development similar to that described above	-large committee worked on development
Policies in General	-guidelines to help the organization to stay on track	-help organization to strive for excellence	-provide plan for action
Purpose of Instructional Supervision	-improve learning of students -self-actualization	-improve instruction and develop staff	-improve instruction

Superintendent Perceptions of:	SA	SB	SC
Individual Responsible for Supervision	-principals	-principals -peer coaching -mentorships	-principals -vice principals
Supervision of Tenured vs. Non-tenured Teachers	-more supervision of non-tenured teachers	-more directive with non-tenured teachers	- principals to supervise non-tenured teachers closer
Training for Supervisees	-did some in the past but has fallen off	-no training provided	-no training provided
Training for Supervisors	-did some in the past -is useful	-no training necessary	-no training necessary
Priority of Supervision	-high	-high	-high
Outcomes of Supervision	-self-actualizing -collegiality -relevant staff development	-improved instruction -staff developmt. -collegiality	-improved teaching -more informed teachers
Ideal Program	-address academics -collaboration	-broad teacher services -differen-tiated	-formal training for supervisors -collab-oration

Intended Outcomes

All three superintendents expressed the opinion that the purpose of the instructional supervision policy and, therefore, of supervision itself was to improve instruction and learning and to develop staff. With respect to the achievement of improved instruction, the superintendents believed that current practice was sufficient to address that objective. Further, they said that

improved learning of students was an automatic result of improved instructional practice.

The intention of a more developed staff was addressed by the superintendents in a very broad context. They stated that requiring or suggesting that teachers attend conferences and professional development courses out of, as well as, within the context of supervision produced a more developed staff and necessarily led to improved instruction.

The superintendents indicated that a major intention of the supervisory process was to provide relevant in-service development for the teachers in the system by fostering close links between supervision and staff development activities that took place in the schools. They indicated that due to recent and rapid growth in the school system, principals had been given a great deal of autonomy with respect to the operation of their schools. Therefore, the superintendents expected each principal to formulate a staff development plan which had strong ties to the supervisory activities in his or her school.

Finally, all three superintendents stated that it was intended to allow the principals to work closely with the teachers for growth rather than on annual performance appraisals. They believed that this process would lead to teacher self-actualization and encourage teachers to complete their tasks with a high level of morale and dedication.

Analysis and Discussion of Superintendent Responses (Policy-in-Intention)

While the superintendents appeared to agree on many aspects of this policy, an examination of their responses reveals incongruencies in key issues. First, there was a high level of agreement among the superintendents with respect to the expectation that principals make supervision a high priority. Yet, they were unable to state just how this expectation was conveyed to the principals. In fact, they appeared to believe, rather naively, that the intended high priority of instructional supervision was conveyed simply by creating a policy to address it.

Two superintendents identified other persons (peers and vice-principals) who could be involved in supervision of teachers –

without specifying the level of their potential involvement. Further, they expected principals to pay particular supervisory attention to non-tenured teachers but, were unclear as to just what difference should be evident or why there should be a difference. In addition, it was intended that the links between supervision and staff development be strong in order to provide relevant in-service training and assist teachers reach a self-actualized state whereby they performed their duties with a high level of morale and dedication. However, these attitudes appeared to be somewhat rhetorical since teachers, and principals, were not given the opportunity to learn more about supervision through thorough and effective supervisory training. Babiuk (1988) states "the need to train all members of the education team [including supervisors and supervisees] is undeniable" (p. 33).

Finally, the view that attending conferences and in-service programs leads to improved teaching and learning seemed naive. It is difficult to believe that there would be a real-life connection between the knowledge that teachers might gain from conferences and the teaching behaviours displayed in the classroom unless regular and effective instructional supervision is provided. As pointed out by Clarke (1995), "[supervision should be] some type of ongoing mechanism [which] goes beyond professional attainment to professional development" (pp. 12-13).

Thus, one is left with a good deal of confusion. If superintendents (the intenders of policy) do not agree with respect to the intentions of the policy, it is unlikely that those who are responsible for implementing that policy will know what they are supposed to do.

Nevertheless, while supervision as defined and described by the superintendents seems to have a rather nebulous quality, it does appear that there is sufficient basis to determine a rudimentary policy-in-intention. Therefore, the policy-in-intention is that principals attach a a high level of priority to conducting proper supervision in their schools and that principals supervise non-tenured teachers more closely than they do tenured teachers. Finally, supervision in this school system is intended for teacher professional growth and improvement of instruction rather than evaluative purposes (even though one of the

superintendents appeared to view supervision and evaluation as being inextricably intertwined).

What Principals Said

Principals' responses were categorized and discussed according to the following themes which emerged from their responses: a) perceptions of the supervisory policy, b) the intent of instructional supervision, c) the actual practice of supervision in their schools, d) the link between supervision and in-service in their schools, e) the training required for supervisors and supervisees, and f) the outcomes from supervision (Table 2 provides an overview of principals' perceptions).

Table 2. Overview of principal perceptions regarding the implementation of the supervisory policy

Principal Perceptions of:	PA	PB	PC
Supervisory Policy	-uses personal growth plans	-not sure of policy -supervision is threatening	-practice outdated -not enough distinction betw. supervision & evaluation
Intent of Supervision	-help teachers -improve instruction	-help teachers -improve instruction	-help teachers -improve instruction
Actual Supervisory Practice in School	-informal -SBWA -every day	-informal -SBWA -every day	-informal -SBWA -vice principal involved
Link between Supervision and In-service	-weak link	-weak link	-weak link
Training Required for Supervisors	-desirable but not essential	-no training required	-mandatory training required

Principal Perceptions of:	PA	PB	PC
Training Required for Supervisees	-desirable but not essential	-no training required	-mandatory training required
Outcomes from Supervision	-reflective staff -life-long learning	-socialization of new teachers -relevant in-service	-reflective staff -happier students -higher success rates
Ideal Supervisory Program	-present practice -teacher portfolios	-present practice	-formal approach -more time for supervision tasks

There were some similarities among the principals' responses but, there were also key differences of opinion bearing upon the instructional supervisory procedures in the individual schools. In addition, one principal – the high school principal – stated that he involved his vice-principals in the supervisory process to an extent (although, he was vague with respect to the actual role played by those individuals).

From the principals' viewpoints, supervision in their schools took the form of daily supervision by walking around (SBWA). This process, described by the principals, took the form of walking around the school and, perhaps, "popping in" on various classrooms in an informal manner in order to check on teachers' progress. The elementary and associate school principals stated that they try to get around to each classroom daily. They believed that they were most effective when they were visible as informal supervisors in the hallways and classrooms of their schools rather than as formal supervisors.

The high school principal, however, stated that the size of the teaching staff (47 teachers) prevented a daily supervisory process. Instead, he was personally committed to formally supervise each teacher in the school during the school year. While he acknowledged that he had not fully achieved his goal, he

stated that he had formally supervised the teachers in three of the six departments in the school.

Based upon the policy of the system, which drew significantly from Glatthorn and Holler's (1987) differentiated supervision model, the principals identified various options for instructional supervision including formal in-class supervision (clinical), collegial (peer) supervision, and supervision by a superintendent which could be requested by the principals (in the case of a teacher doing a poor job) or by teachers. They indicated that they believed that collegial supervision was the method of choice for most teachers. They pointed out that although teachers could request the other forms of supervision, they stated that teachers rarely, if ever, chose the other options.

Two of the principals stated that they perceived no significant difference in the supervisory procedures that they used for tenured and non-tenured teachers. The third one stated that he tended to provide more direction for non-tenured teachers and utilized a closer form of supervision for them. However, he was vague when asked to describe exactly what his process for closer supervision was. Finally, all three individuals stated that there was a link, albeit a weak one, between the supervisory and staff development programs within their schools and two of them had a high comfort level with their present practice.

Analysis and Discussion of Principal Responses (Policy-in-Implementation)

While the instructional supervision procedures were somewhat different in the three schools, there were similarities which could form the basis for a description of policy-in-implementation. All three principals used an informal method of SBWA which they believed gave them a "good idea" about what was taking place in their schools and which they believed provided the basis for an in-service program. One principal stated that he had been conducting formal clinical supervision in which he attended individual teacher's classes and observed the instructional processes used (in a manner similar to the Goldhammer supervisory cycle often without the pre- or post-conferences). The primary source of instructional supervision used by the principals was SBWA which was not identified by either the

superintendents or the policy as being a possible or acceptable choice for instructional supervision.

All principals cited various options, including clinical and collegial supervision, which they said could be used in their schools if their teachers wished. However, only one of them had conducted any instructional supervision beyond SBWA. In fact, the associate school principal stated "I think that teachers view supervision as a threat and I view my role as a helper or aide rather than as a supervisor." Jonasson (1993) states that "supervision is derived from two words, superior and vision [and connotes a hierarchical relationship]" (p. 20) which seems to agree with the principal's view. However, Jonasson also states that supervision should be "the process by which teachers and principals work together for mutual professional development" (p. 20). Thus, by being unwilling to ensure that instructional supervision takes place in either a peer or a clinical context, the principals deprive the teachers of the possibility of professional growth and they deprive *themselves* of potential professional growth as well.

Finally, there was little consensus with respect to the need for training for either supervisors or supervisees. While two of the principals recognized a somewhat tenuous need for training, the third principal could see no benefit or purpose in training for himself or for his teachers – an attitude which must be challenged. After all, common sense dictates that in order to be proficient at a task, one must not only be trained to perform that task but also must perform it regularly.

It is clear that there were some questionable attitudes displayed by the principals. One principal acknowledged that he did not know what the policy required him to do, while the other two followed a form of supervision, SBWA, which was not identified by the policy or by the superintendents as an acceptable practice. As observed by Montjoy and O'Toole (1979), "a vague mandate gives the dominant coalition an opportunity to focus those activities [policy directives] in accordance with their own world view" (p. 468). In this case, the principals seemed to be conducting their activities in accordance with their own world views rather than as directed by policy.

Further, it seems that the lack of instructional supervision beyond informal administrative monitoring (SBWA) by the principals, and by the superintendents might have scuttled the implementation process. Superintendents and the principals indicated that supervision was a high priority, however, since only one of the principals had been conducting instructional supervision beyond SBWA, the practice of the principals seemed to indicate that instructional supervision was not a high priority and did not match the intent described by the superintendents. Since "any particular policy directive is susceptible to an erosion of political support as other issues become relatively more important over time" (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1979, p. 499), it appeared that the principals goal of attaching a high level of priority to instructional supervision was being overshadowed by other administrative endeavors and this was not followed up by the superintendents. Thus, the principals were not following the guidelines described by the policy, and the superintendents seemed to do little or nothing about it.

What the Teachers Said

Three teachers in each of the three schools were invited to take part in this study, however, in one school, only two teachers were willing to participate. Therefore, there were eight participant teachers. The following themes emerged from the teacher interviews: a) their experience of being supervised, b) the difference between the supervision of tenured and non-tenured teachers, c) training required for supervisors and supervisees, c) the link between supervision and in-service, and d) the priority attached to supervision in their school. Table 3 below presents each teacher's perception regarding these themes.

All teachers identified the principal of their school as the primary individual responsible for supervising them. The teachers indicated other individuals deemed responsible for supervision as: assistant and vice-principals, department heads (high schools), and other teachers. There was a difference of opinion expressed with respect to the actual experience of supervision. Three teachers (non-tenured) indicated that they had recently been supervised while the other five teachers indicated that they could not remember having ever been supervised. This

phenomenon appeared significant as it suggested that instructional supervision was taking place in some sectors, however, upon closer inspection, the non-tenured teachers believed that the SBWA conducted by their principals constituted instructional supervision. Thus, none of the respondent teachers had any experience of formal instructional supervision.

All teachers perceived that instructional supervision was not a high priority among the administrators in their schools based upon the fact that they had not been supervised in any meaningful way. In addition, most teachers indicated that they had not recently been given the opportunity for in-service training with regard to supervision. While some did say that in the past they had received some in-service training in peer supervision (one of the policy choices), they indicated that it had been poorly presented and was considered a waste of time since they had not been asked to observe each other or follow up the in-service training in any way. Nevertheless, all teachers indicated that they would welcome the opportunity for in-service training in peer and other forms of supervision. They did specify that it should be offered by knowledgeable presenters and followed-up with in-school practice for relevance.

Five of the eight teachers perceived no link between instructional supervision and the in-service activities in their schools. This appeared to be consistent with principal responses but, which contravened the superintendents' expressed intentions. In addition, all teachers except one believed that there should be a difference between supervision of tenured and non-tenured teachers, which was consistent with the superintendents' perceptions. Finally, all of the teachers indicated that they would welcome more supervision as an aid to help them improve their practice, feel good about themselves, and give direction to their professional development.

Table 3 - Part I.

Overview of teacher perceptions regarding the experience of being supervised

Teacher Perceptions of:	TA1	TA2	TB1	TB2
Experience of Supervision	-weekly - by principal	-little or none	-daily by principal	-none
Tenured and Non-tenured supervision	-no difference -should not be different	-no difference -should be a difference	-no difference -should not be different	-no different -should not be different
Training for Supervisors	-necessary	-not necessary	-not necessary	-necessary
Training for Supervisees	-would help for relevance	-helps but must be followed through	-not necessary	-good idea
Link Between Supervision & Inservice	-weak link	-weak link	-weak link	-no link
Priority of Supervision	-high priority	-low priority	-low priority	-low priority
Ideal Supervision Program	-school based -collegial	-peer supervision with partner at same career level	-present practice okay	-formal and informal practices combined

Table 3 - Part II.
Overview of teacher perceptions regarding the experience of being supervised

Teacher Perceptions of:	TB3	TC1	TC2	TC3
Experience of Supervision	-none	-occasional by dept. head	-none	-none
Tenured and Non-tenured supervision	-no difference -should be a difference	-no difference -should not be different	-is a difference -should be a difference	-is a difference -should be a difference
Training for Supervisors	-necessary	-not necessary	-necessary	-not necessary
Training for Supervisees	-good idea	-would help for relevance	-helps but must be followed through	-helps but must be followed through
Link Between Supervision & In-service	-no link	-no link	-no link	-no link
Priority of Supervision	-low priority	low priority	-low priority	-low priority
Ideal Supervision Program	-broad based with input from other jurisdictions	-more formal supervision to give direction	-formal but account for career stage	-more formal; principal would have more time

Analysis and Discussion of Teacher Responses (Policy-in-Experience)

In this school system, instructional supervision from the teachers viewpoint, appeared to be a low priority task that resulted in rare or non-existent instructional supervision. Considering that the principals viewed formal supervision as being unnecessary, this opinion from teachers was not unexpected. There was a perceived difference between supervision of tenured and non-tenured teachers, but that amounted to the principal walking past the classrooms of non-tenured teachers more often. There was no evidence of formal supervision in any of the schools. While the high school principal stated that he had been conducting formal supervision, no teacher interviewed in his school had been supervised or knew of anyone who had been supervised.

The teachers perceived few if any links between supervision and school in-service activities. This is a problem since, as Zepeda states (Zepeda & Ponticelli,1995), "supervision must encourage discovery and goal setting tied to dialogue and development stimulates experimentation" (p. 1). One must wonder what the perceived level of relevance of school in-service activity is considering the lack of connection to observed teaching behaviours. Nevertheless, all teachers welcomed the opportunity for training with respect to supervision. In addition, teachers requested more (or some) supervision to increase their self-confidence and as reassurance that they were doing a good job. From the teachers comments, it seemed that policy-in-experience amounted to very little experience of supervision at all!

Is Supervision Being Conducted in These Schools as Intended?

An examination of superintendent, principal, and teacher opinions revealed few points of agreement (Table 4 outlines an overview of perspectives). There were, in fact, only three items which seemed to be sources of agreement among the three respondent groups. Superintendents, principals, and teachers unanimously identified the principals as having the primary responsibility for supervision in the schools. In addition, there was also unanimous identification of assistant and vice-principals as potential supervisors through principal delegation. Finally, the purpose of instructional supervision was universally identified as existing for the improvement of instruction. There were some sub-issues associated with each of these statements.

First, while each respondent group identified principals as supervisors, they were not, in fact actually conducting supervision as intended by the policy or by the superintendents. They were informally walking about the school but not actually observing instruction. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) observe that "supervision refers to face-to-face contact [of supervisors] with teachers with the intention of improving instruction and increasing professional growth" (p. 203). Therefore, the supervision described by the principals and the teachers (with the exception of the high school principal's attempts at formal

supervision) was not really supervision at all because it lacked the face-to-face contact that so many of the prominent writers in the discipline prescribe. Thus, any improvement in instruction which may take place over time would not likely to be the result of the supervisory activities extant in these schools.

Table 4. A comparison of respondent perceptions

Perception Categories	Policy-in-intention	Policy-in-implementation	Policy-in-experience
Level of Priority	High	High	Low
Individual Responsible for Supervision	Principal, but could delegate	Principal Assistant/ Vice-Principal	Principal Assistant/ Vice-Principal Department Heads
Techniques Used for Supervision	Administrative monitoring Collegial Clinical Self-directed	Informal SBWA Options include: - collegial - peer - clinical	Little or no supervision Not aware of options
Supervision of Tenured versus Non-Tenured Teachers	Difference expected Closer supervision of non-tenured teachers	No difference in schools A and B Difference in school C	No difference
Purpose of Supervision	Improve instruction Develop staff	Improve instruction Support teachers	Improve instruction, but not done
Link between Supervision and In-service Activities	Strong	Weak	None

Superintendent and principal perspectives were in agreement with respect to the belief that supervision was, or should be, a high priority in schools. However, teachers' perceptions of the experience of supervision suggested that it in actual practice it was not a high priority. After all, if instructional supervision were a high priority in these schools, one might expect that supervision, as described by the policy, would actually be taking place.

Superintendents' intentions that principals use a variety of supervisory techniques including collegial, peer, clinical, and self-directed supervision seemed not to have come to fruition. Principals tended to implement administrative monitoring by conducting "supervision by walking around." While they mentioned options such as collegial, peer, and clinical supervision which they said could be chosen by teachers, teachers stated that they had experienced little or no supervision and appeared not to be aware of the choices available to them. Further, teachers stated that they had not had the opportunity to make any choices with respect to supervision of their teaching behaviours in their classrooms.

Superintendents identified an intention that principals make a strong link between supervision and staff development activities in the schools. Principals indicated that in their implementation of instructional supervision, there were weak links between supervision and staff development activities. Teacher perceptions of staff development activities revealed that there were few if any links in this regard.

Finally, superintendents unanimously identified the intention that principals should provide a closer, more direct form of supervision of non-tenured teachers compared to tenured teachers. Two of the three principals stated that they did not differentiate between tenured and non-tenured teachers with respect to instructional supervision. Most teachers stated that in their experience there was no differentiation between non-tenured and tenured teachers with respect to instructional supervision.

In summary, there was little agreement among policy-in-intention, policy-in-implementation, and policy-in-experience with respect to instructional supervision. It appeared that policy-

in-implementation may have been the obstacle to intended policy experience, however there were difficulties at other levels as well. A synthesis of the work of Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979) and Montjoy and O'Toole (1979) yielded a series of strategies to "maximize congruence among policy objectives, the decisions of the implementing agencies, and the actual impacts of those decisions" (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1979, p. 483). These strategies include: a sound theoretical base, unambiguous policy directives, well-trained leaders, active support from the governing body, and an indication of high priority. An examination of the policy itself along with the descriptions of policy-in-intention, policy-in-implementation, and policy-in-experience revealed several problem areas which included a policy with a weak theoretical base, an ambiguous policy directive, poorly trained leaders, and a weak indication of the intended priority to be ascribed to supervision.

The policy could be viewed as being an *ambiguous policy directive* because it mentioned required supervisory techniques without describing methods to conduct them. In addition, it omitted clearly intended implementation behaviours such as the provision of close supervision of non-tenured teachers. Montjoy and O'Toole (1987) suggested that effective policies "avoid intra-organizational implementation problems [by] establishing a specific mandate and providing sufficient resources" (p. 473). The intended behaviours with respect to instructional supervision may not have taken place because the policy and the behaviour of the superintendents did not specifically require principals to conduct supervision in a clear-cut manner and did not appear to provide the resources to ensure that supervision was conducted.

The superintendents and two of the principals indicated that they believed that mandatory training of supervisors was unnecessary. One must question this belief in view of the fact that only one of the respondent principals had received formal training and was the only one attempting to conduct supervision beyond informal visits to classrooms.

The superintendents described attempts to implement the policy which, for example, included release time from the classroom for teachers to conduct peer supervision. However, they noted that funding for that initiative had gradually "dried up"

and so had the supervisory activities which had emerged from it. It is not surprising that this erosion of supervisory activities had taken place since, as observed by Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979) "it is absolutely crucial to maintain active ... support for the achievement of statutory objectives over the long course of implementation [which] includes requisite financial resources" (p. 496). The fact that the policy itself did not include a statement of financial support, allowed superintendents and principals to find other priorities for the initial implementation funding for supervision and that essentially ended the supervisory activities.

Finally, it seems logical that if a governing body wishes a particular policy initiative to be viewed as a *high priority*, it must indicate in the policy or in some other way that it is, in fact, a high priority. Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979) suggested that "any particular policy decision is susceptible to an erosion of political support as other issues become relatively more important over time" (p. 499). All superintendents indicated that instructional supervision was a high priority in their school system. All principals seemed to concur. However, principals indicated that they felt that the administrative workload given them by the school board, especially at the high school level, was so heavy that they had difficulty finding adequate time to conduct regular supervision. Since the policy did not emphasize the importance of instructional supervision, this may have contributed to the lack of congruence among the intention, implementation, and experience levels of policy in this case.

Food for Thought: Future Research Directions

While the study surveyed only three of 40 schools in one school district, there was a pronounced lack of congruence among the intent, implementation, and experience of the instructional supervision policy in these schools. One must wonder whether there is a similar lack of congruence with other policy areas in the schools.

Guba (1984) stated that an individual's definition of policy affects his or her perception of the importance of policy and the implementation of it. It appears that it may be a valuable exercise to explore views of the nature of policy held by the

respondents in this study and to evaluate the impact of those views upon implementation.

A study of instructional supervision policy implementation practices in other urban school systems might be useful to provide a basis for comparing and contrasting perceptions and could lead to a broader context for describing policy-in-intention, policy-in-implementation, and policy-in-experience. In addition, a comparative study of urban and rural schools may yield interesting results in terms of determining whether the lack of congruence among policy domains is peculiar to urban schools or common among all schools.

While this study examined only one policy area of a school system, it may be possible to infer that there would be a similar lack of congruence amongst policy domains in other areas within this school system.

The importance of training the participants in the supervisory process has been chronicled in many studies. It would be interesting to examine the impact that effective and thorough supervisory training of teachers and principals would have on practice in this school system. One is left with the question "Where should they go from here?" Perhaps a longitudinal study examining the development and implementation of a training program and the resultant behaviours would yield valuable information.

Nevertheless, in light of this study, a director or superintendent of education cannot assume that all policies are being implemented and experienced as intended. It would be wise to develop a method to evaluate policy implementation and experience in order to ensure that behaviour change as intended by the policy is realized.

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