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PEDAGOGICAL CORRECTNESS IN TEACHER EDUCATION: DISCOURSE ABOUT THE ROLE OF SUPERVISION

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ABSTRACT

In this article, educational discourse with respect to supervision as a role and function in both preservice and in-service settings is discussed. Although supervision may no longer be fashionable or "pedagogically correct," its primary aim is still to assist teachers and, as such, can be a potent force, if utilized properly, for improving teacher education and classroom instruction. Efforts to disavow its usefulness, eschew its legacy, or simply call it something else for political (pedagogical) expedience is misguided and a historical. The article begins by examining the nature of supervision as a role and function and indicates the proclivity for "pedagogical correctness" which potentially limits practice and diminishes the efficacy of supervision. Taking a historical perspective, the article then raises issues regarding supervisory theory and practice, as well as probes the very foundations of how teacher educators are influenced by prevailing canons of pedagogically acceptable practices.

Confronted by complex and seemingly perplexing social, political, technological, and moral issues, educational leaders, perhaps more so than ever before, play a crucial role in developing sound educational programming that is both educative and meaningfully relevant. Considering awesome and challenging responsibilities facing educational leaders, I believe supervision as a function for promoting instructional excellence is at least as important, if not more so, than ever before. Notwithstanding its vital importance, the term "supervision" has often been associated with authoritarian practices and, as such, has attracted much criticism (see e.g., Glanz, 1989; Blumberg, 1980; Rooney, 1993; Starratt, 1992).

In the latest Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development yearbook devoted exclusively to supervision (ASCD, 1992) one of the fundamental themes was a concerted effort to remove the "stigma" associated with supervision. Corrine Hill (1992), president of ASCD at the time, affirmed the stigma of the supervisor as "snoopervisor" (p. v). Echoing the theme of this ASCD yearbook which he edited and affirming Sergiovanni's (1992) hope that a day will come when "supervision will no longer be needed" (p. 203). Glickman (1992) concluded:

> Supervision is in such throes of change that not only is the historical understanding of the word becoming obsolete, but I've come to believe that if 'instructional leadership' were substituted each time the word 'supervision' appears in the text, and 'instructional leader' substituted for 'supervisor,' little meaning would be lost and much might be gained. To be blunt: as a field, we may no longer need the old words and connotations.

> Instead, we might be seeing every talented educator (regardless of role) as an instructional leader and supervisor of instruction. If so, the old order will have crumbled. (p. 3)

I don't think that Glickman, Sergiovanni, or Hill were disingenuous by purposely eschewing the word "supervision," but I do think that the penchant for deceptive language, in general, is symptomatic of a more widespread trend to speak in euphemisms–sometimes referred to as jargon or educationese. Pulley (1994), a teacher educator at the University of Texas-Pan American, in a wonderful little article entitled *Doublespeak and Euphemisms in Education*, maintained that our propensity for political correctness or what Lasley (1993) called "pedagogical correctness," in this context, has beclouded our perspective so much so that our language has become confused and self-contradictory at best and "grossly deceptive" and evasive at worst.

Given the complex technological and social realities of schooling today, many of us would agree that supervision as a function in schools faces a daunting task for improving instruction and promoting learning. Beleaguered by some fundamental problems, such as unpopular acceptance and given its rather authoritarian legacy (Glanz, in press), it seems to me unfortunate and misguided to burden the field by further exacerbating the field's identity crisis by denying or unacknowledging its basic purpose and significance. In order to confront and ameliorate the field's deficits (as it is for an individual undergoing counseling therapy for example) we must at least acknowledge our past, however unfortunate we think it may be. We need to be somewhat clear on the meaning we ascribe to the term "supervision." Language is important; it's not just a game of semantics. Language defines reality and how we interpret new meanings (Brown, 1958). To say it's "not supervision" offers little solace and doesn't provide much direction for practitioners in the field. Let's call "supervision" what it is and deal with it. Changing terminologies may be in Pulley's (1994) words "euphemistically correct" but it doesn't deal substantively with the underlying issues that beg for consideration and resolution (Hiser, 1994). As Pohly (1993) argued ". . . some people suggest abandoning the term and substituting something more palatable, but that is a false solution because it fails to deal with the condition that produces the resistance" (p. 2).

To many, supervision connotes a hierarchical and restrictive function. Recently, I was watching a TV news program in which a roundtable discussion ensued regarding the selection of a new chancellor for the New York City schools. One critic charged that "we need stricter supervision of both schools and the board of education." Other commentators agreed that close supervision was necessary to ensure better schooling. Supervision in daily discourse is often used to connote superordinate and subordinate role relationships and authoritarian practices. For the past three quarters of a century, educators have tried to minimize the stigma associated with supervision by accentuating more constructive aspects of the process. Although historically, the term "supervision" refers to a variety of nondirective as well as directive approaches that can be used, it soon became inappropriate to emphasize directive methods in supervision.

Why do we in education, in general, fall prey to pedagogically acceptable practices? I think the underlying answer has to deal with the proclivity we educators have for finding quick solutions to often complex educational and social problems (Reitman, 1992). Confronted by a plethora of challenging societal problems, schools have historically been perceived as the primary institution in which many of these problems could be addressed, if not solved. Vulnerable to communal and societal pressures, educators have sought strategies, techniques, or as one researcher termed it, "quick fixes" to resolve critical issues in schools. Ravitch (1983) posited that our penchant for gimmickry and faddism in schools is due in large measure to the readily accepted view that "the best way to reform society is to reform the schools." Shortsighted, irresponsibly hopeful, and having deleterious effects on instructional programming, this approach to addressing serious problems has led educators to search for the proverbial golden fleece. Thus far, the fleece has been elusive.

Unable to resolve the many intractable problems confronting education, always ready to grasp the latest trend that promises a panacea, and uncritically applying a narrow set of prescriptions and proscriptions to educational problems, it is not surprising that educators are attracted to "pedagogical correctness." Pedagogical correctness "is characterized by a set of 'right' and often avant-garde beliefs about how, the curriculum, and schools should be structured" (Lasley, 1993, p. 77). The consequences of pedagogical correctness are both obvious and onerous. Cherishing certain practices in favor of others potentially limits practice because certain ways of doing supervision, for instance, are not considered relevant nor efficacious. Educators, according to Lasley (1993), "begin to think

in terms of absolutes (a right or wrong way in all instances) rather than the efficacy of practice vis-a-vis a context" (p. 79). When supervisors or those concerned with supervision, avoid particular methods because they may not be pedagogically correct or fail to consider exceptions to practices that are mandated as pedagogically correct instructional improvement is severely compromised.

Reluctance to offer directive methods of supervision is not only evident but illustrative of this penchant for "correctness." In preservice settings, for instance, there is much need for directive measures for many student teachers because of their lack of experience and low levels of confidence about teaching. Based on a recent survey I conducted of 40 student teachers in both urban and suburban settings in New Jersey, they (65%) often complained that their cooperating teacher and/or university supervisor were too non-directive and did not offer substantive comments after observing lessons. One student gave a typical response: "My professor is very nice and often praises me. Yet, sometimes I wish he'd offer more constructive criticisms. I can't be doing everything right?!"

Studies done with preservice teachers supports my observations and findings that student teachers prefer directive approaches over nondirective methods of supervision (Copeland, 1980; Copeland & Atkinson, 1978). Students in these studies reported that they had difficulty resolving instructional problems under nondirective approaches. Students preferred when cooperating teachers and university supervisors suggested concrete solutions and specific recommendations. Desrochers (1982) reported that student teachers considered supervisors more credible when they used a directive supervisory style. Although student teachers may prefer directive supervision, surveys of existing supervisory practices indicate that most supervisors use "collaborative and nondirective approaches" and "provide feedback that stimulates teachers' thinking rather than controls teachers' actions" (Glickman, 1990, p. 561).

Cooperating teachers (n = 26) and university supervisors (n = 30) in my study were asked whether they thought student teachers preferred directive or nondirective methods of supervision. University supervisors responded that they employed nondirective measures because, as one supervisor stated, "student teachers are so fragile and nervous that they need confidence-building and support." "I see myself as a facilitator, not an ogre," commented one university supervisor. Although cooperating teachers were more likely to employ directive measures, many were reluctant to offer other than cursory suggestions for improvement. When queried as to why more directive measures were not employed cooperating teachers pointed out some the following reasons: lack of time, wanting to remain collegial, lack of effectiveness, and too punitive. Admittedly, when asked whether they felt any pressure to be more nondirective than directive, few, if any, said they did. "I give the student what I think he or she needs," stated one cooperating teacher. Yet, as I suspect, prevailing attitudes and theories do affect, sometimes unconsciously, the practice of supervision in schools.

Supervision for experienced teachers has been characterized as a "meaningless ritual" (Blumberg & Jonas, 1987). When supervisors or those concerned with supervision avoid engaging teachers in collaborative and meaningful discussions about instructional improvement and amidst an impoverished school climate that is unresponsive to attempts at instructional improvement, then it is not surprising that supervision as such becomes perfunctory and unproductive. It is not that teachers do not see the need for reflection and improvement, but to the contrary most teachers welcome assistance and recommendations for improvement when offered intelligently and forthrightly.

Contrary to the widely held belief that inservice teachers do not want directive supervision, I believe that many of them welcome supervision that is constructive, direct, and intelligent. Teachers want one-to-one help. Teachers want feedback from, for example, an assistant principal who observes a lesson and conducts a post conference during which insights and suggestions for improvement are offered (Glanz, 1994). Under this scenario, both supervisor and supervisee can be co-inquirers. Often recommendations for improvement are not dictated but rather emerge amidst a reflective, inductive dialogue between teacher and supervisor. The supervisor facilitates and guides the teacher to understand the complexities of classroom interaction. Although supervision can sometimes be threatening, particularly for non-tenured faculty, it offers an opportunity to obtain valuable information about teaching and learning.

Pajak and Glickman (1984) conducted a study in which groups of inservice teachers were shown videotapes of simulated supervisor feedback in post-observation sessions. Teachers did not particularly favor supervisors who merely described their classroom observations without making any concrete suggestions. Most, if not all the teachers involved in the study, preferred supervisors who after describing what they saw in the classroom made specific recommen-

dations for improvement. As Glickman (1990) in summarizing this study stated: "It can be surmised from these studies that teachers generally preferred descriptive feedback about their teaching, followed by discussion of interpretations and future goals, culminating in collaborative suggestions and decisions about future instructional actions" (p. 554).

Teachers want supervision that is well-informed, practical, and helpful, regardless of who offers it or what model is utilized (see, e.g., Blumberg & Jonas, 1987; Brandt, 1985; Whistler, 1984). Some of those who advocate a dissolution of supervision aren't cognizant or accepting of this premise. Relying on "pedagogically correct" approaches not only potentially limits viable options for improving instruction, but does little if anything to explain what supervisory practices may in fact contribute to our efforts in renewing schools. Whether called cognitive coaching, instructional leadership, facilitative practice, critical inquiry, or supervision, it's about working face to face with classroom teachers to refine teaching practice (Nolan, 1995).

The penchant for pedagogical correctness is quite obvious in regards to how educators view and discourse about supervision. According to current belief systems, supervision based on hierarchical roles is considered anathema. A perusal of various definitions, for example, in prominent textbooks on supervision (e.g., Krey & Burke, 1989; see also Holland, 1994), indicates an emphasis on "democratic and professional" processes of supervision and an avoidance of anything remotely referring to directive methods. Current thinking and action (i.e., discourse) in the field does not support bureaucratic authority, personal authority, professional-moral or technical-rational authority as being equally legitimate conceptions of supervision. Rather, supervision has been reconceptualized and redefined more narrowly (e.g., Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993). Inclusivity and an acceptance of diverse ideas about theory and practice of supervision do not appear to dominate discourse on supervision.[1] The degree to which discourse as reflected in the literature affects practicing supervisors can only be left to conjecture. Obtaining quantitative data to support such a premise is difficult. I will suggest in this article, however, that historical precedence lends credence to the premise that pedagogical correctness influences, if not dominates, supervisory practices in preservice and inservice settings.

Pedagogical Correctness in Supervision: A Historical Perspective

Supervision, whether performed in preservice or inservice settings, is about engaging teachers (or teachers-in-training), face to face, in an effort to improve instruction with information, techniques, and skills that is likely to have beneficial effects on student learning. Supervision can be facilitative and collegial and supervisors (call them mentors, lead teachers, cooperating teachers, department chairpeople, or persons with formal supervisory responsibilities) can act as coaches and reflective practitioners. Yet at times supervision may rely on expert knowledge and supervisors may employ more directive measures. Historically, however, aside from early inspectoral supervisory practices that stressed directive methods, since around 1920 literature in supervision highlighted more democratic and collaborative methods. Clearly, discourse in the field advocated nondirective methods over directive supervision. Supervisors and teacher educators have attempted to disavow the field's authoritarian legacy in favor of nondirective supervision. Refusal or denial of this crucial point is misguided and ahistorical. Moreover, proposals and theories of supervision, historically, have masqueraded under a miscellaneous array of names and approaches. Understanding this historical anomaly will explain why I think the field of supervision remains vulnerable and easily succumbs to "pedagogical correctness" which, in turn, affects how teacher educators offer supervision in both preservice and inservice settings.

Earliest recorded instances of the word "supervision" established the process as entailing "general management, direction, control, and oversight" (Grumet, 1979; Gwynn, 1961; *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989). Payne (1875), author of the first published textbook on supervision, stated emphatically that teachers must be "held responsible" for work performed in the classroom and that the supervisor, as expert, would "oversee" and ensure "harmony and efficiency." Methods in supervision prior to 1920 were impressionistic and inspectional (Glanz, 1991).

[1] Recently, I was reviewing a manuscript that is likely to be published in one of the more widely read journals in the field in which the author(s) concluded, "Our student teachers need to know that our role is not to be judges and critics, or even models of expert teaching, but rather co-participants in the construction of narratives, the articulation of their commitments, and the shaping of their practices." I'm troubled by the apparent avoidance of anything romotely connoting directive methods of supervision. Also, see Nevins Stanulis (1994).

The raison detra of supervision was to eradicate inefficiency and incompetence among the teaching force. Various elaborate rating forms were developed to accomplish this major objective of supervision (Boyce, 1915). Improvement of instruction was less important than purging the schools of the inept. Supervision as a role and function in schools was more concerned with evaluative measures that were rooted in bureaucratic, inspectional-type supervision. Supervision of this sort attracted vociferous criticism from teachers and others. Representative of the nature of this opposition are comments made by Sallie Hill (1918), a teacher speaking before the Department of Classroom Teachers, decrying supervisory methods of rating. Hill charged:

> There is no democracy in our schools. . . . Here let me say that I do not want to give the impression that we are sensitive. No person who has remained a teacher for 10 years can be sensitive. She is either dead or has gone into some other business. . . . there are too many supervisors with big salaries and undue rating powers. (p. 506)

The movement to alter supervisory theory and practice to more democratic and improvement foci, while at the same time minimizing the evaluative function, occurred in the 1920s as a direct result of growing opposition to autocratic supervisory methods. Consequently, supervisors tried to change their image as "snoopervisors" by adopting alternate methods of supervision. The following poem, quoted in part below, indicates the desired change of focus to more democratic methods in supervision:

> With keenly peering eyes and snooping nose,
> From room to room the Snoopervisor goes.
> He notes each slip, each fault with lofty frown,
> And on his rating card he writes it down;
> His duty done, when he has brought to light,
> The things the teachers do that are not right. . . .
>
> The supervisor enters quietly,
> "What do you need? How can I help today?
> John, let me show you. Mary, try this way."
> He aims to help, encourage and suggest,
> That teachers, pupils all may do their best.
> (Anonymous, 1929)

Influenced in large measure by John Dewey's (1929) theories of democratic and scientific thinking as well as by Hosic's (1920) ideas of democratic supervision, supervisors attempted to apply scientific methods and cooperative problem-solving approaches to educational problems (Pajak, 1993). More fundamentally, however, the rhetoric of democratic supervision now focused on making supervision more palatable and acceptable among teachers. Despite the advancement of a democratic theory of supervision, the stigma of supervision as an autocratic and inspectional function was not easily lifted. Criticism against supervisory practice in schools continued unabated (Rousmaniere, 1992).

Other models and conceptions of supervision emerged in the decades to follow. Leadership, clinical, developmental, transformational, among other models, had a common bond in that they emerged as a reaction to bureaucracy in education and were influenced by the human relations (democratic) movement beginning in the early 20th century (Glanz, in press). Democracy in supervision implied a "deep concern for human relationships" and practices that encouraged and respected the dignity of the teacher (Spears, 1953). Each of the models attempted to support this view of supervision, albeit in very different ways. In doing so, a view was proposed to counter the ill-effects of supervision's bureaucratic legacy.

Scholars of late have indicated the need to abandon vestiges of authoritarian conceptions of supervision. To be sure however, efforts to eliminate the stigma of the "supervisor" and of "supervision" are not new. Pedagogical correctness emphasized a denial of directive supervision in favor of more nondirective methods. This proclivity for nondirective methods in supervision manifested itself in attempts to even eschew the term "supervisor." As early as the third decade of the twentieth century, Reeder (1930) affirmed that supervision as inspection was being intensely criticized by teachers and that a "*change in title*" [emphasis added] might reduce potential conflict. Barr, Burton, & Brueckner (1947) suggested that the term "supervisor" might be replaced by "consultant" or "adviser." In the 50s, titles such as "director" or "coordinator" were common. Less common, although prevalent were "helping teacher" and "resource person" (Spears, 1953). In the 60s and 70s, "change agents" were in vogue. Wilhelms (1973) acknowledged the tendency for many educators to eschew the word "supervisor." As we stated earlier, the latest ASCD (1992) yearbook devoted to supervision indicates that the trend to eliminate "SUPERvision" is still very much part of discourse in the field.

Efforts to reconstruct supervision as a role and function have been as much an attempt to avoid the field's autocratic heritage as it has been to find its niche in schools. Attempts to downplay the field's

legacy of evaluative and inspectional practices and accentuate its improvement function have led to confusion of purpose and direction. Put simply, the field of supervision has never come to grips with its legacy. Beset by a lack of consensus in defining its purpose, a low approval rating, and a host of other seemingly intractable problems, supervision has remained vulnerable to a cacophony of proposals and theories. We who are concerned about supervision and the role of supervision in teacher education have never adequately addressed the fundamental and underlying problems of the field. Consequently, supervision as a role and function has traveled incognito.

It was, in fact, Harold Spears, an assistant superintendent in San Francisco and author of a widely used textbook of supervision in the 50s, who first expressed a concern that the field was travelling incognito. Spears (1953) stated:

> Thirty or 40 years ago, when supervision was first settling down in the organizational scheme of things as a service to the classroom teacher, a supervisor was a supervisor. Today, when supervision is attaching itself to almost anything that has to do with furthering learning, a supervisor masquerades under a miscellaneous array of titles. Supervision today often travels incognito. (p. 84)

Vulnerable, ill-defined, and unwilling to stake claim to its intended purpose, the field of supervision has tried to conceal itself and, as such, problems have intensified. The fact that supervision has been travelling incognito has had significant consequences for supervision as a field of study and as a professional practice (Hazi & Glanz, 1997).

Teacher educators and those concerned with instructional supervision have also been influenced by the emphasis of nondirective and collaborative methods. Although, Glickman's (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 1995) developmental model of supervision that emphasizes a variety of supervisory approaches (nondirective, collaborative, and directive methods) has received attention, studies indicate that relatively few supervisors use directive measures (e.g., Rossicone, 1985). Influenced by teachers, especially experienced ones, and by discourse that emphasizes nondirective methods, supervisors who practice in preservice and inservice settings avoid directive methods of supervision. As such, the practice of supervision is limited to pedagogically acceptable practices.

Conclusion

Supervision as a role and function in schools emerged and found legitimacy within the upheavals of the late 19th century in the drive to bureaucratize schooling. Supervision, a function controlled by superintendent/supervisors, became synonymous with inspection and promoting "teaching efficiency." Discourse in the field was laden by control/oriented theories and practices that were reinforced by scientific management principles affecting education, in general, and administration and supervision, in particular. Discourse about supervision, as reflected in textbooks, speeches at national conferences, and daily interactions between teachers and supervisors became enamored with and has long been influenced by directive methods. As criticisms against what was perceived as authoritarian methods of supervision proliferated, the rhetoric of supervision dramatically changed towards more democratic methods. It soon became politically (pedagogically) wrong to rely on directive measures. In an effort to eschew its bureaucratic legacy, supervision as a field and professional practice, over the past seventy-five years, opted for pedagogically correct methods.

Pedagogical correctness tacitly shapes the way we think about and practice supervision. Fundamentally, it limits our thinking and practice because supervisors, be they university supervisors or principals for example, fail to consider the exceptions to practices that are mandated as the pedagogically correct way. Supervision should be conceived as that function which utilizes a wide array of strategies, methodologies, and approaches aimed at improving instruction and promoting educational leadership as well as change. Conceived as such, supervisors may then work on curriculum development, staff development, school-wide reform strategies, action research projects, and mentoring while at the same time may utilize directive, collaborative, or empowering methods. Supervision is supervision regardless of the context in which it is practiced (e.g., preservice and/or inservice settings). Supervision as such doesn't become meaningless or lacking purpose. Rather, supervision is pliable enough to meet a wide range of instructional needs. Remaining responsive to diverse demands would be the field's greatest asset. Supervision can achieve conceptual clarity in this context because it isn't afraid to use "pedagogically incorrect" strategies when appropriate and warranted. Differentiated, transactional, and transformational supervision all find likely justification within this more encompassing

view of the field. Like other fields such as counseling (Williams, 1995) and religion (Pohly, 1993), supervision as practiced in schools becomes purposeful, relevant, and influential.

In conclusion then, some view the evolution of the practice of instructional supervision as a progression from crude, unsophisticated approaches to more refined techniques and methodologies. For others still, supervision, as traditionally conceived and practiced, is defunct. For others, current proposals and theories of supervision are merely masquerading under a miscellaneous array of names and approaches in order to renounce the field's bureaucratic heritage. Supervision, as a function, may no longer be fashionable or "pedagogically correct," but regardless of what it is called, it is still "supervision." Its primary aim is still to assist teachers in improving instruction. As long as this remains of vital importance, teacher educators can utilize supervision as a potent force toward promoting excellence in schools.

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CONTENTS