Supervisory practices and challenges faced by senior high school principals in Greater Monrovia, Liberia: implications for quality education

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ABSTRACT

Education is an inseparable development element that influences a nation's socio-economic growth and its citizenry for a quality life. This study aimed to explore the supervisory practices by senior high school principals in Greater Monrovia, Liberia and the challenges faced during supervision. The study employed qualitative design and included 30 participants. Findings indicated that senior high school principals used supervisory practices such as inspection of teachers' lesson notes, punctuality, organized in-service training and inspection of classroom managerial skills of teachers. Notwithstanding these supervisory practices by school principals, the study found that supervision was impeded by lack of resources for teaching and learning, limited teaching staff, inexperience teachers, and improper attitudes by teachers and students.

1. Introduction

Education is an inseparable aspect of development that influences the socio-economic growth of a nation and the quality of life of its people. The key institutional framework used to establish individual skills and expertise is called the formal educational system of a nation and acts as the continuum of an important ingredient for public services (Mansell et al., 2009). It is assumed that there is a need for educational stakeholders to supervise educational practices to achieve consistent beneficial outcomes in order to provide a proactive and quality educational system for individual community and national growth. The prerequisite for quality and efficient education therefore requires stable supervisory structures (Okendu, 2012). To that end, supervisory assessment of teaching staff helps educators to get the help they need to excel, evaluate and consider the benefits and demerits of various educational approaches and strategies to ensure quality student success in schools (Whetton, 2009; Ngole and Mkulu, 2021).

Educational supervision ensures that adequate educational standards are met in schools and promotes the professional development of teachers to meet the learning needs of students (Mulatu, 2016; Ampofo et al., 2019). In addition, supervision is primarily seen as behaviorally oriented, process-focused educational leadership, contributes to organizational actions, coordinates interactions, provides for enhancements and maintenance of educational programs, and evaluates its achievements (Burke and Krey, 2005). Quality education can be achieved in schools by improving the quality of teaching and learning (Briggs, 2012). As a result, many nations are reforming educational supervision because of its effectiveness as a key instrument for monitoring and improving the quality of education (Murage et al., 2017). It has become important because instructional supervision will enhance classroom practice and lead to the performance of students (Mulatu, 2016). There is no question that educational supervision increases the academic performance of students, the quality of teachers and teaching, and helps supervisors to control the instructional work of teachers (Wanzare, 2011).

Educational supervisors are obliged to educate, assist, and encourage teachers in order to meet the goals of supervision (UNESCO, 2007). The World Bank (2010) considers supervisory regimes to be the constant fields of change used by countries to improve their educational performance and to mitigate the education problems associated with university education. In addition, supervision represents all attempts by designated school administrators to provide teachers and non-teaching personnel with leadership (Akinwumi, 2002).

The role of principals in schools is to direct and guide the teaching staff's work. It means that principals are accountable for helping teachers do their job better by joint efforts (Koedle and Yunus, 2015). They are important players in the judicious administration of human and material
capital for the successful operation of schools. According to Kotirde and Yunus (2015), principals execute the following functions in the exercise of their supervisory mandate: a) mentoring inexperienced teachers to promote a supportive entry into the profession; b) raising teachers to minimum standards of successful teaching through daily coaching and in-service training; c) continuous development of case skills for individual teachers; working together with different groups of teachers to enhance the learning of students; and e) working with teachers to adapt and coordinate the school curriculum to meet the needs of students and to be on the path to approved education standards.

In addition, in the practice of the supervisory activities of principals, Egwunyenga (2005) believes that supervisory procedures such as classroom visitation and evaluation, inter-school visitation, seminars, and micro-teaching are generally carried out by school principals. In addition, major teaching supervision functions performed by principals include monitoring the attendance of teachers during classes, monitoring and ensuring adequate preparation of lesson notes, verifying and ensuring the adequacy of the work scheme and documentation of work records (Ayeni, 2012). A study conducted in Finland showed that the concepts of supervision and practical implementation, and special methods of supervision are instructional supervision that promotes inclusive teaching (Aliila et al., 2016). These include knowledge of similar strategies; thorough supervision preparation, regularity and long-term length, as well as sensitivity to the needs of teachers, varied techniques, and understanding of the supervisory process, respectively. In Ghana, interpersonal relationships are considered as the greatest advantage of all types of educational supervision, which are often needed to achieve quality outcomes (Mensah et al., 2020). Instructional supervision is seen as the process of checking the work of teachers to ensure compliance with regulations and procedures and maintain loyalty to higher authorities (Wanzare, 2011). Esia-Donkoh and Baffoe (2018) found that in Ghana, educational supervision widely practiced to improve teacher motivation includes orientation of new teaching staff, reviewing the work record of teachers, provision of in-service instruction, observation of lessons and punctuality control.

However, research has shown that school principals face difficulties in discharging supervisory duties, including a lack of supervisor preparation, a weak relationship between teachers and supervisors and a lack of support for supervisors from higher offices (Rashid, 2001). In their field of study, supervisors may often be competent but may lack professional qualifications and continuing training to update their educational knowledge and skills required for proper supervision (Ankoma-Sey and Marina, 2016). The overwhelming workload on school supervisors, such as administrative routines and personal lessons, often provides insufficient time inside their respective schools to perform realistic supervisory exercises (Enaigbe, 2009; Ngole and Mkuulu, 2021). The lack of ample time during school supervision presents a threat to teaching and learning in the sense that principals would not be able to inspect all of the school’s teaching and learning activities (Ampofo et al., 2019). Supervision is often grossly inadequate without sufficient teaching resources to promote the quest for information by teachers and learners (Enaigbe, 2009). Principals in schools are therefore encouraged to provide teachers and students with the necessary teaching and learning materials to be effective in supervising and holistically developing both the teacher and the student (Akinfolarin et al., 2017).

In addition, circuit supervisors are challenged by the un-cooperative attitudes of teachers in the form of unpreparedness to write lesson notes, inefficiency of teachers in teaching hours, lateness and absenteeism (Osei et al., 2020). Some school supervision challenges include student and teacher examination malpractices, high school dropout rates, and mass movements of students from schools (Kirimu et al., 2017). In some cases, principals do not involve teachers in formulating school rules and providing new teachers with mentorship to facilitate supportive induction (Onyali and Akinfolarin, 2017). More so, the attitude of fault-finding among supervisors, lack of motivation for teachers, lack of training and retraining of teachers through refresher courses, nomenclature of teachers and irregular allocation of funds to provide in-service capacity building training are some of the issues facing adequate supervision (Tubosun & Umar, 2016; Dewodo et al., 2020).

As a country, Liberia has been engaged in a prolonged civil war crisis that has brutally killed thousands of resourceful people and made almost all of its economic and development sectors vulnerable to under-productivity, particularly in the education sector. In order to have a vibrant education system in the country, strategies have been developed by the Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Education (MOE) to improve secondary education through the national education plan; and to make the curriculum more relevant to the country’s socio-economic conditions; to provide greater possibilities and exposure to the world of work for students and to increase the number of facilities (Ministry of Education of Liberia, 2019). The above objectives are the result of a thorough evaluation of the country’s secondary schools as a sign that the government is committed to secondary education.

A school tour and classroom assessments are being carried out by District Education Officers (DEO) and principals. The MOE has established a three-year organizational plan (2014–2016) as a way of redirecting Liberia’s vulnerable education sector. Liberia’s Primary Education Recovery Program (2007–2009) and the Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008), which also has education as one of its top goals, are other policy documents geared to improving education in Liberia. The MOE has established a plan to create active school management committees at each school to encourage quality education and a credential program to help improve the skills of principals in schools. In order to restore rural teacher training institutes worldwide, the Ministry of Education has also strengthened its cooperation with renowned organizations, institutions and other educational stakeholders, such as UNESCO and USAID.

The performance of students in senior high schools is still not as expected, especially in the Greater Monrovia District, despite the numerous interventions made by the Government of Liberia through the MOE. The results of the West African Examination Council (WAEC) in 2016, which reported its most colossal failure in the Senior High School Examination, can be seen as evidence. An estimated 22,671 students failed out of the total number of 46,972 candidates registered for the test, reflecting nearly half (48.46%) of the candidates who sat for the exam (Liberia Senior High School Examination Council, 2016). It partially shows how inefficient the supervisory activities of principals in Liberia’s secondary schools have been and how damaging, with focus on those from the Greater Monrovia District, to the educational outcomes of students.

The University of Liberia’s 2013 entrance exam results showed that all 25,000 applicants who completed the exam failed (Smith, 2013). Most of the candidates for the entrance exam were secondary school students from the Greater Monrovia District, particularly within the country. The findings of the 2014 entrance exam for secondary school students at Liberia’s premier university (University of Liberia) also showed that fifteen (15) of the 13,000 high school students passed the entrance exam successfully (Rogers, 2014). Education stakeholders in the nation blamed inadequate supervision by administrators of high schools and teachers for the underperformance of high school students in the entry test. The report challenged the kind of supervisory activities given to students in these different secondary schools relating to the planning and learning materials. We can undoubtedly conclude that insufficient supervision was part of the factors that could have led to the underperformance of students.

Quality and sustainable education is assumed to be based on the use of appropriate supervisory practices. The questions then are: what are the supervisory practices of principals of secondary schools aimed at achieving quality education in Liberia’s Greater Monrovia District? What are the challenges facing secondary school principals in discharging their supervisory duties in Liberia’s Greater Monrovia District? In the Greater Monrovia District, the answers to these questions are uncertain. Although this information is available in many countries because of research conducted in this field of study, such information is unknown in Liberia.
to date because there is limited research in this region. In order to bridge this information gap, it is necessary to know the situation of Liberia, particularly Greater Monrovia, as there are different supervisory practices carried out in different countries according to their demands and different challenges faced on the basis of different circumstances. It is against this context that this study seeks to establish the supervisory practices of principals of secondary schools and the difficulties faced in enforcing these practices in Liberia's Greater Monrovia District. The results of the study are intended to include information on policy recommendations for enhancing supervisory practices in order to achieve quality education in Liberia and to contribute to literature. Furthermore, the results of the study will provide guidance to prospective researchers on quality education in Liberia.

2. Methods

The aim of this study was twofold: to analyze the supervisory practices of principals in secondary schools in the Greater Monrovia District and to explore the challenges they face as these practices are carried out. The reasoning behind the option of the Greater Monrovia District is that it comprises 84 secondary schools with a rapidly increasing population of students, which is the highest in Liberia. The district has underperformed in external examinations such as the WAEC and the University of Liberia entrance exam over the past five years. Furthermore, the socio-economic condition of the area has required many teachers in the district to teach in more than one secondary school.

A qualitative research design was adopted by the researchers. Qualitative design was used because we wanted to consider the perspectives of instructional supervisors from their viewpoint of daily life in supervision. In educational study, qualitative research is important since it is argued as the best option to help render the regular activities in the classroom noticeable, which most often go unchecked, but can clarify how quality education can be accomplished (Kozleski, 2017). In addition, due to numerous cultural practices that are not easily generalized, qualitative research is assumed to guide evidence-based practice in education (Kozleski, 2017). The selection of private and public schools in all secondary schools in the Greater Monrovia District was not for comparison, but rather to offer a reasonable understanding of supervision. Prior to the fieldwork, the researchers sent an official letter to the Montserrat County Education Officer and the Greater Monrovia District Education Officer (DEO) to request permission and other assistance to conduct the study in that location. In the study environment, the DEO provided the researchers with an authorization letter and a list of schools. In the different secondary schools which were randomly selected, the letter was issued to principals.

Thirty high school principals were included in the sampling process. It is worth noting that the sample size was not predetermined. Indeed, we interviewed 45 senior high school principals. However, as we approached 30 participants in the analysis stage, we noticed that no new themes emerged. As Guba and Lincoln (1982) asserted, the criterion of informative redundancy can be used to determine sample size in qualitative study; that is, sampling should be stopped when no new data is produced by sampling more units. As a result, we chose to focus on 30 participants. Thirty (30) senior high schools were therefore chosen at random for the research. The system of randomization was the lottery method in which school names were marked, and certain schools were simply randomly chosen. The non-replacement method was the process of randomization. The fact that we had a large number of senior high schools at our disposal, as well as the need to remove bias in the study, informed our decision to use simple random sampling. When conducting in-depth interviews in a qualitative study with a large number of participants, it is best to use a random number generator to pick samples (Baltes and Ralph, 2020). The means of data collection was semi-structured interviews. With the help of the interview guide, principals were interviewed and the interviews were captured on audiotape with the consent of school principals. Each day, two schools were visited, during which interviews with principals were conducted. The interviews had a length of 40–50 min. As far as this study is concerned, all ethical concerns required in human research have been observed. The ethical committee at the Department of Educational Administration and Management at the University of Education, Winneba, issued the ethical clearance required to conduct the study.

The six stages of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) were used to analyze data. Through repeated careful listening by the researchers, data was transcribed into written form. These steps involved data familiarization, the generation of initial codes that search for themes, the analysis of themes, the classification and naming of themes, and the production of the report. Thematic analysis enabled the researchers to understand the data in depth and to attach significance to it in accordance with the study’s goals and related literature.

3. Results

3.1. Demographic information

Data revealed that 19 of the school principals who took part in the research were males and 11 females. Twelve of the participants were aged between 40-45 years, while 8 and 10 were aged between 46-50 and 51 years and above, respectively. Twenty-two principals had a first degree in terms of academic credentials, and 8 had a master's degree. The majority (18) of principals had served from 10-15 years for the sum of teaching experience, while 12 had served from 16 and above years. In Table 1, these can be shown.

3.2. Supervisory practices adopted by secondary school principals in Greater Monrovia District

Study participants expressed their views on procedures and operations, specifying their supervisory positions. In this regard, supervisors spoke about their roles and practices/methods as presented in themes below.

3.2.1. Supervisory roles

Some of the activities they do in school were spoken about by supervisors, who detailed their positions as heads of school. Participants revealed their responsibilities as a check of school teacher lesson plans and schedules:

My job as a supervisor is to review the lesson plans of teachers and make sure that they stick to the national curriculum. I am responsible for ensuring that whatever is included in their programme is what they can teach in accordance with the national curriculum (Supervisor, A).

I am responsible for planning class schedules and ensuring that they are followed by teachers. This is to make sure teachers are following the curriculum (Supervisor, B).

Some participants, narrating their respective positions, disclosed the administrative duties in the different institutions in which they were heads:

I am the institution’s head administrator, overall head of supervision and allocation of duties to other administrators. I see the regular running of the school (Supervisor, C).

I see how the school is best started; how the school gets the best material for teaching and learning and environmental maintenance (Supervisor, D).

Furthermore, several school supervisors disclosed their positions as being accountable for the affairs of teachers, non-teaching employees, and students:

In order to fulfill the requirements of the educational system, I deal with the supervision of both teachers and students. I am in charge of the supervision...
and assessment of teaching and non-teaching personnel. I also make sure that there are enough teachers for the school (Supervisor, F).

In terms of stakeholder meetings, a female supervisor expressed that she worked as a representative of the school:

School representation in relation to meetings with educational stakeholders such as the Parent Teacher Association, NGOs, community representatives, civil society and the Ministry of Education (Supervisor, G).

3.2.2. Supervisory practices/methods

Some activities they participated in as supervisors were explained by participants. It was noticed that in classrooms, supervisors routinely reviewed activities. In that sense, the participants had to say:

We maintain physical visits to the school, listening to teachers who are unaware of them during their teaching times (Supervisor, H).

Problems faced by teachers while teaching are explored by one-on-one communication with the principal during the teacher's instructional period (Supervisor, I).

Routine supervision activities are carried out. Teacher lessons should coincide with the curriculum... It is carried out during instructional times by frequent visits to the classroom (Supervisor, J).

During instructional hours, there are visits to the different classes to observe the teacher's teaching methods and management skills in the classroom. If the teachers' methodology is not sufficient, these teachers are later called into the office for questioning and instruction (Supervisor, B).

In addition, participants shared that they gave teachers practical assistance to support the skills and knowledge of their students. In the voices below, these are explained:

I sit with teachers and correct them after the submission of lesson plans, if there are mistakes, by showing them the right things to do. In doing so, educators with challenges will quickly pick up. They will also know the dos and don'ts of lesson planning, too (Supervisor, K).

We provide teacher advice since most of them have not gone to teacher training colleges and some are still studying at some of those colleges (Supervisor, L).

A supervisor disclosed that periodic workshops were arranged for them in order to upgrade the teachers:

At the beginning of the school year, I make sure that a workshop for teachers is planned, especially in the field of classroom management, which is often recruited by experts (Supervisor, M).

It was noticed that in terms of management, supervisors used various approaches. The review of lesson notes on a daily basis was included in these approaches.

We use various approaches, such as the review of lesson plans for students. For proper investigation or scrutiny, the plans are usually taken from the Vice Principal for Instructions (VPI) office. Teachers whose lesson plans are not adequately planned are called for career orientation (Supervisor, N).

It emerged that weekly inspections of teachers' lesson plans for the week were conducted. This offered an indication of what the instructor had intended to teach during the week. A participant had to say this:

When it comes to teaching and lesson preparation, the Vice Principal for Instructions (VPI) operates jointly with the teachers. Thus, teachers do their lesson plan on a weekly basis and then present it to the VPI, who then approves or disapproves of it. For individuals to meet, we establish conditions and examples... teachers are required to apply their plans on time and also be in the class on time (Supervisor, O).

There was a way to check teachers' attendance and movements in different schools. This was found to have ensured that teachers were present to teach their assigned subjects at any session. The supervision process was narrated by a participant:

I guarantee that checklists are used to track whether or not teachers are in their respective classes. An attendance register is also used to supervise teachers on and off campus (Supervisor, P).

In terms of decision-making in school administration, administrators have ensured a shared strategy with teachers. This gave the teachers a feeling of belonging in the schools' affairs. A supervisor had to say this:

We achieve this through daily meetings with staff in which democratic decisions are taken on the institution's behalf. However, often decisions are taken arbitrarily without any consultation. This is achieved mostly by convincing teachers and not by being authoritative (Supervisor, Q).

3.3. Supervisory challenges of principals in secondary schools

Study participants spoke about concerns that challenged them to exercise their supervisory roles. Challenging problems involving inexperienced teachers, overpopulated students, lack of teaching and learning facilities, and the attitudes of teachers and students were revealed. Such problems are analyzed in themes.

3.3.1. Inexperienced teachers

It was revealed that certain teachers were not trained by teacher training colleges. These teachers did not have the qualifications, abilities and experience needed to teach in senior high schools. In the voice below, a participant revealed this:

We encourage all teachers to attend schools that will help them to understand clearly why they are in the classroom. But it becomes a concern if a teacher comes from high school or university, and studies other subjects such as economics, English and only enters the classroom directly. To learn the ethics of the profession, teachers are required to join educational colleges (Supervisor, A1).

Another participant revealed that some of the teachers did not know how to prepare lesson plans and, as a consequence, they were frequently absent from teaching.

Since teacher payments are made every two weeks, their average performance for the two weeks will be related to the submission of the lesson plan. Therefore, if a teacher does not submit his/her plan on time, the teacher in question has not been working for the week. Some of the teachers don't
3.3.2. Overpopulated students

The principals revealed that it was difficult for both teachers and principals to supervise a significant amount of student enrolment. A large number of students per class have been found difficult to handle by teachers.

The greatest obstacle is the tremendous school enrollment of pupils, which poses difficulties in terms of supervising teachers in the classroom. For example, having a teacher managing 50–60 students in the classroom makes it very hard for that teacher to pay attention to individual students (Supervisor, D1).

Students were forced to leave the school and, because of the big size class, they struggled in class. This was shared by another principal.

Scaling the size of the classroom to 45 students and asking students at the end of the academic year who would not leave the school. Therefore, the population remains a significant challenge to the institution (Supervisor, E1).

It was also noticed that the congestion of students in class posed a challenge to the academic performance of students because they could not be well handled by teachers.

Due to the wide in-flow of students, there is congestion in some schools, causing a class size of more than 50 students that will affect student results (Supervisor, Q1).

3.3.3. Lack of resources for teaching and learning

The research found that school principals lacked the resources necessary to fulfill their supervisory roles as needed. In improving teaching and learning in their respective schools, the lack of resources restricted them. A principal disclosed that she lacked the money to buy textbooks to help teaching and learning.

Restriction of material resources since the school is primarily run on a tuition basis with a greater percentage given out as salary for teachers and other employees, making it difficult for our students to purchase related textbooks from Ghana or Nigeria. Therefore, only the senior classes bring textbooks and the majority of the students are left to handle by teacher assistance (Supervisor, O).

A principal explained that the school library and classrooms were not fitted with new or up-to-date textbooks and furniture to satisfy all the student population, narrating his difficulties.

The school has a library, but the requisite textbooks are lacking. The books that are different from the syllabus used by the schools in the library are old. Moreover, the classrooms are not properly designed to contain overpopulated students (Supervisor, H).

A participant also pointed out that the inadequate funds to run the administration of his school is an obstacle to his supervision.

We lack the funds to organize our schools’ programs. Since we are part of the Methodist school system, we hope that while we are not part of government subsidies, the Department of Education will invest any funds in this direction (Supervisor, W).

3.3.4. Bad attitudes of teachers and students

It was found that the supervisory roles of principals were threatened by behavior of certain teachers and students. A participant reported that some poor attitudes of male teachers caused them to sexually harass female students that created school problems.

The school's most difficult problem is male teachers' poor judgement on female students due to the students' physical appearance. We have had cases of sexual assault with female students by teachers and it acts as a threat to our oversight (Supervisor, J).

It was also found that male students were involved in stealing, consuming alcohol, and displaying lousy conduct, which forced principals to discipline them. A female principal shared this in an interview.

Male pupils, on the other hand, are involved in activities such as drinking alcoholic drinks, gambling and using profane languages. Often students are expelled, disciplined or counselled on the basis of these attitudes. These behaviors make supervision more difficult because there are many students and it is hard to monitor them (Supervisor, F1).

A principal said that students were fond of reporting teachers to their parents on matters that were meant to stay in the classroom, which created a lot of difficulties in their oversight for them.

Occasionally, students report their teachers and principal/administrator to parents. Since we find it difficult to behave in that way, this challenges our supervision a lot. Thus, it becomes a serious bone of contention when it comes to teachers and students sitting side-by-side to clarify those problems. Therefore, teachers and students are independently called to clarify their side of the story without overt intervention with the other to curb this.

In the end, one can eventually see that the teacher is wrong, but it becomes a difficult situation to take decisive action that may weaken him/her (Supervisor, M).

4. Discussion

The purpose of the study was to analyze principals’ supervisory practices and the challenges they face in supervising educational activities. Findings have shown that regular supervisory procedures were conducted by principals, and during instructional periods there were visits to the different classes to observe the teacher’s teaching approach and management skills in the classroom. The results showed that, as part of their procedures, principals reviewed teachers’ lesson plans and schedules every week. This was done by the directors to get to know whatever teachers were going to teach during the week, how they intended to accomplish this mission, and give their feedback to it. This review of the lesson plan was performed by the principals through weekly inspections. The results agree with the statement that educational supervisors conduct their regular teaching and learning supervisory tasks differently in secondary schools, since conditions in the school setting inform the supervisory process (Mwesiga and Okendo, 2018).

Moreover, principals checked the school’s use of teaching hours and even checked lesson plans to see that they were up to date. This result coincides with previous studies that showed that school principals play the role of coaches and mentors by coordinating educational events with teachers as it helps to encourage mutual trust and support between teachers and principals (Mulatu, 2016; Allida et al., 2018). During meetings with all stakeholders in the education sector, principals fulfilled their supervisory positions by representing their respective schools. Moreover, it was found that, as part of their supervisory procedures, school principals had a routine audit on events in the classrooms. Newly recruited and novice teachers were constantly observed to track their
deficiencies during teaching hours. Following the report, if the need arose, administrators provided practical assistance to educators to help them provide effective and productive teaching. This affirms Kotride and Yunos' (2015) assertion that principals are responsible for helping teachers do their job better by joint efforts and could be done during instructional time by paying daily visits and observation to classrooms.

Principals arranged annual seminars for them to upgrade the skills and knowledge of teachers. The results showed that in-service training programs organized by principals were present. As stated by Egwuonyenga (2005), the principals' workshop in their supervisory activities allows teachers to address and find solutions for common problems. It is clear that professional development programs for teachers help expand teachers' awareness and skills and enhance their competence and effectiveness in the classroom (Menasah and Jonathan, 2016). Emphasizing this, Abdulrazak (2020) found that teacher-organized professional development programs are necessary for teacher upgrading to meet increasing challenges. Principals required teachers to sign attendance books while they attended school, as well as signing them after every period of class. The results showed that initiatives were put in place to check both teachers and students' punctuality. This was based on the assumption that one factor that is really important for supervision in schools is discipline. The results agree with the statement that instructional supervision requires a closer, frequent and consistent internal supervisory procedure for school heads/supervisors to ensure quality teaching and learning (Allida et al., 2018). The research showed that principals ensured consistency as part of their discipline among both teachers and students. Principals provided the requisite syllabi required for teaching, and to promote successful teaching and learning, it was done side by side with proper time management. In general, supervisory activities carried out in schools by educational supervisors are intended to help teachers recognize their deficiencies and change their actions appropriately in order to have a positive impact on their professional performance (Aldaihani, 2017).

The research found that principals faced challenges that impeded their supervision as they exercised their supervisory positions. Some teachers were found to be inexperienced, which jeopardized the success of supervision by principals. Their inexperience in planning a lesson plan and teaching threatened teaching and learning effectiveness. Besides, results indicate that limited resources such as income, classroom chairs, teaching and library books, and teaching and learning materials were required to enhance school teaching and learning. This corroborates with the argument by Enaigbe (2009) that supervision becomes grossly inadequate without sufficient teaching materials to stimulate the search for knowledge by teachers and learners. In addition, Mensah et al. (2020) revealed that the key problems that adversely affect the successful conduct of educational supervision in schools are supervisor incompetence, inadequate supervisor training, uncooperative attitude of teachers, inexperienced supervisors and lack of resources for supervision. Reiterating Terra (2019), educational supervisors are often concerned with administrative activities, thus neglecting their central supervisory mandate. The energy, time and resources of educational supervisors, teachers and students are wasted by such heavy and complex workloads because it does not give supervisors adequate time for intense instructional supervision and support for teachers (Tyagi, 2010). Educational supervision is currently seen as moving from teaching and learning, but is limited to fault-finding rather than giving teachers practical guidance (Tyagi, 2010). On the other hand, their job is hampered by a lack of manuals, supervision, a lack of sufficient budget and teacher resistance to supervision due to a lack of knowledge of the value of supervision for teachers (Terra, 2019).

Furthermore, the population of students was high to be overseen by principals which served as a challenge. Also, some teachers sexually assaulted female students and students displayed poor conduct, such as stealing, smoking and drinking, which impeded the supervision of principals. Inadequate teaching staff, poor qualifications of some teachers, and the dismissive attitudes of some teachers towards supervision were other causes that the research found to have threatened supervision by principals. Osei, Mensah, and Agbofa (2020) argue that the supervisory exercise will not have the desired impact unless teachers perceive supervision as a means of facilitating professional development and student learning. It is important to remember that supervisory success depends on the collective efforts and cooperation of instructional supervisors and teachers (Mulatu, 2016).

5. Limitation

The study was limited to Greater Monrovia senior high schools and used qualitative research design. As in other research designs, this constrained us to select a larger sample size. The results are intended to reflect the situation in Greater Monrovia, Liberia and not for generalization. The data was carefully analyzed, and the perspectives of the participants were portrayed and interpreted in a way that ensured equal representation. It is recommended that future studies consider a large sample size in the district to include more educational supervisors.

6. Conclusion

The study attests that adequate supervision is a sine-qua-non for the achievement of effective and efficient teaching and learning in schools, both external and internal. For this purpose, in order to achieve their set objectives, educational heads and principals embarked on numerous activities in the form of supervision. If supervision is threatened by lack of resources, insufficient teaching personnel, inexperienced teachers, inappropriate attitudes of teachers and students, as well as overcrowded students, therefore the primary goal of supervision in general will not be accomplished. MOE in Greater Monrovia needs to make deliberate efforts to work with senior high school heads to mitigate these problems in order to enhance teaching and learning in senior high schools.

7. Recommendations

The results show that student overpopulation places a lot of pressure on principals and restricted them to provide in-depth supervision to achieve successful teaching and learning. In order to obtain proper supervision, it is proposed that the Greater Monrovia Education District should put up more instructional buildings and employ more teaching personnel to square up the student-teacher ratio. Given that the lack of resources such as teaching and learning materials impeded the supervision of principals and proper teaching and learning, the researchers recommend that the budget allocation to the Greater Monrovia Educational District should be increased by the MOE to help purchase the needed resources for teaching and learning. Furthermore, the Liberian government should seek donor funding from international organizations such as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to supplement its financial allocations to the educational sector in order to increase educational quality. Based on the fact that they lacked the necessary teaching credentials, some teachers were found to be inexperienced. While it was disclosed that workshops were organized for teachers on some occasions but not regularly as required; it is recommended that regular workshops should be organized for all teachers in order to develop their teaching knowledge and skills. In view of the fact that some students were sexually abused due to the bad attitudes of some teachers; it is recommended that the MOE should organize gender-sensitive/response training for all teachers in partnership with the Greater Monrovia Educational Districts to help restrict teacher-student relationships mainly defined by interpersonal content and complementarities. Sexual harassment should be thoroughly clarified to teachers during gender-sensitive training as a matter of course. To act as a deterrent, policies on sexual harassment in senior high schools should be implemented, and teachers implicated in sexual assault scandals should have their licenses revoked. In addition, all senior high schools can display billboards and
posters on their campuses to publicised the impact of sexual harassment on teaching and learning. Furthermore, it is proposed that future studies should concentrate on why, in various settings, the problems mostly faced by educational supervisors occur.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Cornelius Robert U-Sayee: Conceived and designed the experiments; Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data; Wrote the paper.

Emmanuel Brenyah Adomako: Analyzed and interpreted the data; Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data; Wrote the paper.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Additional information

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