

Identifying Improvements in Teaching and Learning via Supervision Support: A Pragmatic Perspective

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Abstract

This article scrutinizes the professional support provided to teachers by supervisors to improve the teaching-learning process within the dimensions of learning behaviours and learning assessment in Ethiopian primary schools. The study employs a mixed-methods research design. The questionnaires were responded to by 382 in-service postgraduate diploma primary school principals and supervisors in the Educational Leadership and Management Department at Hawassa University. A semi-structured interview was conducted with 12 senior principals and supervisors. The results illustrate critical gaps in the supervision support to teachers for the improvement of learning behaviours and learning assessment. The study suggests that support-oriented supervision could play a significant role in assisting and improving the teaching and learning process. Hence, regional and federal governments should work together with development partners to enhance the competency of supervisory staff to provide enabling support to teachers and thus improve the quality of the teaching and learning processes in Ethiopian schools.

Keywords

Teaching-learning, supervision support, learning behaviour, learning assessment, the teaching profession

Introduction

Over the last three decades in Ethiopia, priority has been given to the expansion of education. As a result, a quantitative improvement has been achieved in student enrolment, teacher training, and the establishment of new schools, colleges, and universities. Conversely, the quality of education has been declining at all levels. In order to deal with these problems, in 2007 the Ministry of Education declared a general education quality improvement initiative (Ethiopian Ministry of Education, 2015). One of the areas on which the initiative has focused is the improvement of the quality of teachers where the quality of teaching is the most significant determinative factor in the quality of education (Gordon, Kane, & Staiger, 2006; UNESCO, 2015a; UNESCO, 2015b). In an attempt to improve the quality of teaching, supervision is one of the most important approaches that has been taken to support teachers in their provision of good quality teaching and learning activities in the schools. In this regard, studies affirm that the quality of education to some extent depends on the quality and quantity of supervision support offered to teachers in schools (De Grauwe & Carron, 2011a; UNESCO, 2015b). Furthermore, supervisory support to teachers has the potential to improve classroom practices by improving the quality of teachers' teaching skills, leading to student success by way of improving teachers' professional growth and work performance (Baffour, 2011; Daud et. al., 2018; Kholid & Rohmatika, 2019; Mofareh, 2011; Mukoro & Pupu, 2013; Pajak, 2001).

In the 21st century, with the development of the human resource theory of management, supervision is viewed as practical support to be provided to teachers for the purpose of ongoing development of teaching staff (Ahmad & Omar, 2013). It has also been asserted that supervisory support is equally important to teachers and students in terms of ensuring their constant interaction so as to enhance the teaching-learning process in the classroom (Al-Saud, 2007; Hoque, Alam, & Abdullah, 2011). Furthermore, supervision in education is primarily concerned with improving classroom practices for the benefit of pupils, irrespective of what is entailed by curriculum or staff development (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 1998). Beach and Reinhartz (1989) have also asserted that the focus of supervision is on providing teachers with information about their teaching and boosting their instructional skills and performance. Similarly, Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (1998) have recognized supervision as an act of encouraging human relations and teacher motivation and of enabling teachers to try out new instructional techniques in a supportive environment.

Although more than eight decades have passed since supervision was introduced into the Ethiopian education system, it has not contributed much to the improvement of teaching-learning quality in the schools (Eshetu, 2019). Supervision practices in Ethiopia have been

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dominated by traditional administrative duties rather than pedagogical support to teachers, and approaches to supervision are not developmental or psychological in nature. Furthermore, many supervisors suffer from knowledge gaps in their provision of support to teachers in the teaching-learning process (Eshetu, 2020; Habtamu & Eshetu, 2019).

Supervision practices in Ethiopian primary and secondary schools are currently implemented on three levels, the first being school inspections, which are carried out by the district (Woreda) education office every one, two, or three years to determine each school's status with regard to its implementation of the school improvement program. The second level of supervision practice is school-based supervision, which is less formal and is carried out by school principals, department heads, and senior teachers in order to mentor and provide professional support to novice and underperforming teachers. The third level is cluster supervision, a more formal type of supervision designed to provide intensive pedagogical support to teachers, which includes addressing learning behaviours and learning assessment to improve the teaching-learning process within schools in the same cluster (Eshetu, 2020; Ethiopian Ministry of Education, 2015; Giordano, 2008). This type of supervision can be carried out by a cluster resource centre supervisor who is assigned to provide intensive supervision support to teachers and school leaders. The purpose of school clustering is to bring together three to five schools within close proximity of each other and provide administrative and pedagogical support to their teachers and school leaders by creating additional leadership structures closer to the school level (De Grauwe, 2001; De Grauwe & Carron, 2011c; Giordano, 2008).

As staff development leaders, cluster supervisors should equip teachers with the skills to manage the overall activities and behaviours of students in the classroom. In this regard, Glickman (2002) has stated that supervisors equip teachers with skills to help students coordinate schedules between tasks and to handle the varied behaviour of pupils in the classroom. Similarly, it has been acknowledged that supervisors should support teachers in order to create an active assessment environment for students in the classroom, as some teachers have limited assessment skills and techniques (Ethiopian Ministry of Education, 2015; Sawari, 2013; Sintayehu, 2016; Yigzaw, 2013). Additionally, Stiggins (2017) has indicated that supervisors need to be able to build a balanced local assessment system to support and certify learning, continue to refine achievement standards, ensure local assessment accuracy, balance local communication systems so as to support and certify learning, and ensure a foundation of assessment literacy among teaching staff.

Today in Ethiopia, cluster supervisors are expected to carry out three core functions, such as supporting school leaders and teachers in administrative and pedagogical activities, providing coordination and support in the implementation of different education development programs, and serving as liaison agents in the dissemination of reform and ensuring its implementation in the schools (Eshetu, 2020). In recognition of the importance of the professional support provided to teachers by cluster supervisors, this study has sought to

scrutinize it in order to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process within the dimensions of learning behaviours and learning assessment in primary schools in Addis Ababa, Oromia, and the Southern Regional States. The goal of this study is to trace problems relating to evidence and identify improvements so as to contribute to the development and reform of Ethiopia's education systems. Hence, the study has adopted a pragmatic research perspective in order to identify solutions and create new knowledge in the field. Bearing this in mind, this study seeks to answer the following question: what are the gaps in the supervision support to teachers in terms of learning behaviours and learning assessment?

Previous research

Today, improving the quality of education is of increasing concern worldwide. Several indicators of education quality are concerned with the teaching and learning process and are based upon the quality and professional competency of teachers (World Bank, 2018; UNESCO, 2015b). It is essential to have teachers with adequate subject and pedagogical knowledge to ensure the quality of the teaching-learning provided in schools. Recognizing this imperative, UNESCO (2015b) has recommended that all countries ensure the availability of teachers in receipt of good support so as to address the educational challenges in today's world. Nevertheless, the quality and professional competency of primary school teachers in Ethiopia currently face serious challenges. Thus, higher priority should be given to empowering the teaching profession and increasing the professionalism of teaching staff via developmental and support-based supervision.

It is globally acknowledged that development-oriented supervisory support has the potential to bring improvements to the teaching profession with the ultimate goal of improving classroom practices, student academic achievement, and teacher professional development. Over the last three decades in Ethiopia, priority has been given to the expansion of education, with the result of quantitative improvements in student enrolment, teacher training, and the opening of new schools. Conversely, the quality of education has been declining at all levels. UNESCO (2015a, 2015b) has argued that the quality of teaching is the most important factor in the quality of education, but in Ethiopia, the evidence suggests that there has been a decline in the competency of the teaching force (World Bank, 2018).

There is international evidence that effective supervision is one of the best approaches to supporting teachers in order to develop quality teaching-learning activities in schools (OECD, 2005). Multiple studies confirm that the quality of education depends to a significant degree on the quality and quantity of supervision support offered to teachers (De Grauwe & Carron, 2011b; Eshetu, 2020; Giordano, 2008; OECD, 2005; UNESCO, 2015b; World Bank, 2018).

In Ethiopia, supervision practices are carried out by a cluster supervisor who is tasked with supporting teachers and school leaders in teaching-learning and administrative activities. However, research indicates that this system has contributed little to the improvement of teaching-learning quality in schools (Ethiopian Ministry of Education, 2015; Eshetu, 2020;

Tadele & Bekele, 2017). Furthermore, the primary purpose of supervision is to support and guide teachers in order that they can achieve professional development, the ultimate goal being quality instruction. Unfortunately, the supervision service in Ethiopian primary and secondary schools is too blurred and weak to fulfil this purpose (Ethiopian Ministry of Education, 2015). Apparently, this is because supervision practices have been dominated by traditional administrative and compliance concerns and have not taken into consideration teachers' developmental and psychological needs (Eshetu, 2020). Furthermore, most supervisors have knowledge gaps that affect their support of teachers in teaching-learning activities (Eshetu, 2019; Eshetu, 2020; UNESCO, 2015b). By adopting the pragmatic research paradigm, this study has sought to identify these gaps affecting supervision support to teachers within the dimensions of learning behaviours and learning assessment.

Theoretical framework

To identify the gaps in the supervision support to teachers in terms of learning behaviours and learning assessment, this study has adopted the pragmatic perspective of the research model as its theoretical framework.

The pragmatic research paradigm has emerged from the assumption that an understanding of realities and the generation of knowledge can be enhanced through actions, situations, and consequences by using a multiplicity of research methods. The pragmatic research model is based on the assumption that researchers should use the methodological approach that works best for the particular research subject being investigated (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). This research paradigm is commonly associated with mixed methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), where the focus is on the consequences of the research and the research questions rather than on the methods themselves. Paradigmatic philosophers do not claim that it is impossible to understand the "truth" by a single scientific method nor do they claim to know where it is possible to determine social reality as constructed under the Interpretivist paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Thus, the central concern of this paradigm is that the application of "what works" is best suited to solving the problems (Patton, 1990).

Given that this study is intended to identify the gaps in the professional support rendered by supervisors to teachers who require assistance in order to improve the learning behaviours and learning assessment of students, the identification of problems referred to as realities according to the Positivist perspective and the construction of socially accepted realities according to Constructivist assumptions are insufficient to answer my research question, which is solution-focused. Recognizing this fact, Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest that, instead of focusing on methods, researchers should emphasize the research problem and question and use all approaches available to understand the problem along with associated solutions in order to help professionals improve practices on the ground. Thus, from the pragmatic point of view, we understand that a single dimension or mono-paradigmatic research orientation is not good enough. Instead, what professionals need, especially in the

field of education, is various worldviews that will provide a range of methods that are appropriate for studying the phenomenon. Thus, professionals who are looking for different methods of research can be practical and use pluralistic approaches that allow them to apply a combination of methods in a single study (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

As a pragmatic professional working in the field of education, my wish is to bring about change both in Ethiopian education and worldwide via the application of a pragmatic perspective to the research approach because it is solution-focused. That is to say that, as well as the creation of new knowledge, the key objective of pragmatism is to better understand the problem and to produce new policy suggestions, professional frameworks, programs, or initiatives, with improved protocols and training for professionals and stakeholders who are working to fix the problems of education in the 21st century. In addition, pragmatists use a variety of tools and methods for a single study if this generates more valid and reliable findings. Furthermore, as far as I understand it from reviewing the literature, pragmatism rejects the notion that the outcomes of educational research are actual descriptions of reality; rather, it recognizes research outcomes as possible connections between actions and consequences.

Method

Research design

A mixed-methods design was used for this study as it involved the merger of quantitative and qualitative data. This design was deemed to be most suitable for this study because it is used to integrate multiple research approaches to collecting data within a single study. Using mixed methods, the researcher was able to mix and match qualitative and quantitative data together to address the research question. David and Sutton (2004) acknowledge that the use of mixed methods is an attempt to gain benefit from different methods across the spectrum of research philosophy.

Participants

The participants in the study have been selected from two different groups depending on the positions they held within the structure of educational leadership and management. The first group consisted of school principals and deputy principals who were receiving supervision support from cluster supervisors. The second group consisted of cluster supervisors who were providing supervision services to school principals, deputy principals, and teachers. The data collection process was accomplished during the first semester of the summer program in the 2018-2019 academic year. The participants were postgraduate diploma students in school leadership (PGDSL) and supervision and came exclusively from Addis Ababa, Oromia, and the Southern Regional States. The participants consisted of 382 first-year students in the Department of Educational Planning and Management at Hawassa University, including 142

principals and 240 questionnaire respondents. In addition, six senior principals and six senior supervisors participating in the same program were also interviewed.

Data collection instruments

In the context of this study, an instrument suitable for collecting data from a relatively large sample was the questionnaire. Thus, closed-ended type items were prepared using a 5-point Likert-style scale. The questionnaire had two themes: (1) learning behaviours (10 items) and (2) learning assessment (10 items). Content validity and internal consistency of items were checked by a professor in the field at Hawassa University. In addition, the reliability of the items was tested following the conduct of a pilot test at a primary school in Hawassa City. As a result, the aggregate reliability test value of Cronbach's alpha in the two dimensions was identified as 0.96, indicating that the instrument was reliable because the value was greater than the acceptable value of alpha: 0.70 (Santos, 1999).

The qualitative phase of the study used the semi-structured and non-directive interview questions in Appendix B. The interview items were prepared in order to gather in-depth data corresponding to learning behaviours and learning assessments. The items were also validated by the opinion of two experts in the field. The interview items related to the items in the questionnaire, as the aim of the mixed-methods study was to triangulate the data collected through the questionnaire. During the interviews, in order to allow for additional discussion of diverse topics and for understanding phenomena in-depth, further questions were formulated as delineated by Glesne (2011). With the permission of the participant, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to MS Word during the course of analysis using ATLAS.ti-9 software. Each interview lasted approximately 45-50 minutes.

Data analysis

The data collected through the questionnaires was analyzed by way of SPSS V.20. In the analysis of the quantitative data, the frequency (N), mean (X), standard deviation (SD), t-test, and p-test were used. On the 5-point Likert type scale, the mean value was interpreted as 4.21-5.00 "Strongly agree," 3.41-4.20 "Agree," 2.61-3.4 "Partly agree," 1.81-2.60 "Disagree," and 1.00-1.80 "Strongly disagree" (Arcagök & Yılmaz, 2020). The qualitative data was analyzed by way of the qualitative narrative written techniques delineated by Creswell (2018). Member-checking methods were used to check the accuracy of the information transcribed to Word. Results acquired from interviews were indicated with quotation marks. The school principal interviewees were coded as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6. The supervisor interviewees were coded as S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, and S6.

Results

The findings of this study were analyzed and illustrated on the basis of the research question. Consequently, in order to strengthen the results obtained in its quantitative part, the study is, as indicated in the title and introductory section of this article, grounded in the pragmatic

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research paradigm. This is because the pragmatic research paradigm assumes that the understanding of realities and the generation of knowledge can be enhanced through multiple situations, consequences, and actions.

The application of a pragmatic perspective in this study allowed me to use both quantitative and qualitative methods to identify the existing reality of the cluster supervision practices in terms of learning behaviours and learning assessment in primary schools in the three regions. Thus, using pragmatic research methodology assumptions, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected within the dimensions of learning behaviour and learning assessment. This data is presented below.

Learning behaviour

Table 1. Respondents' views on supervisory support to teachers within the dimension of learning behaviours

No	Supervisors support teachers to:	Respondents	N	X	SD	Overall results				
						X	SD	df.	t-value	p-value
1	encourage pupils to connect knowledge in their learning	Principals	142	2.30	.58	2.23	.59	381	.45	.51
		Supervisors	240	2.55	.61					
2	teach students multiple learning strategies	Principals	142	2.06	.70	2.16	.74	381	.30	.55
		Supervisors	240	2.56	.79					
3	recognize the students learning styles in designing the instruction	Principals	142	2.41	.66	2.18	.69	381	.64	.66
		Supervisors	240	1.96	.73					
4	motivation students in self-learning activities in the classroom	Principals	142	2.37	.69	2.23	.69	381	.56	.59
		Supervisors	240	2.38	.70					
5	encourage teacher-student and student-student interactions in class	Principals	142	2.38	.68	2.62	.59	381	.39	.47
		Supervisors	240	2.59	.51					
6	help students productively manage their time in the classroom.	Principals	142	2.60	.85	2.79	.83	381	.61	.45
		Supervisors	240	2.58	.81					
7	develop skills in handling varied behaviours of pupils in the classroom	Principals	142	2.49	.59	2.54	.60	381	.65	.49
		Supervisors	240	2.60	.62					
8	equip different techniques of classroom management	Principals	142	2.26	.73	2.51	.73	381	.53	.58
		Supervisors	240	2.46	.74					
9	demand quality instruction in classroom	Principals	142	2.56	.67	2.49	.77	381	.63	.50
		Supervisors	240	2.42	.87					
10	balance high expectations with student support in classroom	Principals	142	2.21	.74	2.38	.74	381	.47	.56
		Supervisors	240	2.56	.75					
Aggregated results		Supervisors	240	2.46	.71	2.41	.69	381	.50	.53

Table 1 gives the mean values ("X") for all ten variables that the respondents were asked to scrutinize with regard to their opinion on their cluster resource centre supervisors' support to teachers on the identified variables. The result shows that both groups of respondents disagreed, as the mean value for each variable is between "1.96-2.60" (i.e., "disagree"). Thus, almost all of the respondents within the two groups perceived the cluster resource centre supervisors as not properly supporting and working with teachers to improve the learning behaviours of students in the schools included in this study.

Furthermore, an independent sample t-test was conducted to determine whether the perceptions of the respondents in the principals and supervisors group vary with regard to

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the variables that represent the practices of supervisors in supporting teachers to advance the learning behaviors of the students. The result shows no significant differences between the two groups for variables 1 to 10 respectively: $t(381) = .45, p > .05$; $t(381) = .30, p > .05$; $t(381) = .64, p > .05$; $t(381) = .56, p > .05$; $t(381) = .59, p > .05$; $t(381) = .83, p > .05$; $t(381) = .60, p > .05$; $t(381) = .73, p > .05$; $t(381) = .77, p > .05$; and $t(381) = .74, p > .05$. Thus, based upon these results, it can be said with confidence that the cluster resource centre supervisors are not properly supporting and working with teachers to improve the identified learning behaviors of students in the primary schools of the three regions.

Regarding support being provided by supervisors to teachers to create optimistic learning behaviour such as encouraging "teacher-student and student-student interaction" and "recognizing the learning abilities of students in lesson planning," some of the principals interviewed made statements as follows:

Several supervisors do not conduct classroom observation to identify the problems associated with teacher-student and student-student interaction. (P2)

In my cluster, the supervisor does not conduct classroom observation to identify the learning difficulties of students in order to support the teachers in improving classroom practices. (P4)

There are ways for supervisors to identify the difficulties of students in the classroom and support teachers so as to create optimistic learning behaviour in the school. (P6)

With regard to their actions in encouraging "teacher-student and student-student interaction" and "recognizing the learning difficulties of students in lesson planning," S3, S4, S5, and S6 made statements as follows:

As do many supervisors, I focus [more] on routine and administrative activities than on the teacher-student and student-student interaction in the classroom because I don't have enough time to conduct classroom observation. (S2)

In the same way, S3 said:

I am not conducting the classroom observation to assess the learning difficulties of students in the class, because I expect that each subject teacher can identify the learning problems of their students and support them as much as possible. (S6)

However, S5 said:

Sometimes I conduct classroom observations because it is very important to collect first-hand information on classroom practices, including teacher-student and student-student interaction and the teaching-learning process, and related difficulties of

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students in the classroom, and suggest that teachers solve the problems in the classroom.

Concerning the support provided by supervisors to teachers so that "teachers [can] help their students manage their time" and "develop skills to handle various types of pupil behaviour in the classroom," the interviewed supervisors expressed the following views:

I am suggesting the school principals motivate and follow up with the teachers to inspire the students to manage their time during and after the lesson by reading at the library and elsewhere. (S1)

On the other hand, S3 said:

I don't have direct experience in supporting teachers to inspire their students with regard to time management or related issues in the classroom because it is the school principals' responsibility.

Similarly, S6 noted that "instead of me, it may be more appropriate for the principals to support teachers in helping their students manage their time" and "developing the teachers' skill in handling various types of pupil behaviour in the classroom."

As regards supervisors equipping teachers to "motivate students in self-learning activities" and making teachers "familiar with different techniques of classroom management," P1, P3, P4, and P6 all made disclosures to the effect that it is apparent that supervisors should provide training for teachers, but their own experience shows that supervisors do not organize the training program for teachers to equip them with the skills required to motivate their students in self-learning activities or to equip teachers with diverse classroom management techniques.

On the other hand, S2, S4, S5, and S6 disclosed that it is very important to equip teachers with the skills to guide their students in self-learning activities and to make teachers familiar with different classroom management techniques. In order to put this into practice, however, training is a very important tool and they are not providing on-the-job training to teachers because they do not have enough material or financial resources to conduct different training programs in their cluster schools.

Learning assessment

Table 2 below shows the mean values for all ten variables. The respondents were asked to provide their opinion on the cluster resource centre supervisors' support to teachers on the identified variables. The result proves that both groups of respondents disagreed, as the mean value for each variable is between "1.85-2.60" (i.e., "disagree"). Thus, almost all of the respondents within the two groups perceived the cluster resource centre supervisors as not

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properly supporting teachers in improving the learning assessment of students in the primary schools of the three regions.

In addition, an independent sample t-test was conducted to recognize whether the perceptions of the respondents in the principals and supervisors group varied with regard to the variables on the practices of supervisors in supporting teachers in enhancing the learning assessment of the students in the schools in the study. The result shows no significant differences between the two groups for variables 1 to 10 respectively: $t(381) = .12, p > .05$; $t(381) = .18, p > .05$; $t(381) = .19, p > .05$; $t(381) = .17, p > .05$; $t(381) = .10, p > .05$; $t(381) = .16, p > .05$; $t(381) = .20, p > .05$; $t(381) = .13, p > .05$; $t(381) = .11, p > .05$; and $t(381) = .14, p > .05$. This result confirmed that the cluster resource centre supervisors were not providing good support to the teachers in respect of improving the identified learning assessment variables in the primary schools of the three regions.

Table 2. Respondents' views on supervisory support to teachers within the dimension of learning assessment

No	Supervisors support teachers to:	Respondents	N	X	SD	Overall results				
						X	SD	df.	t-value	p-value
1	create an active learning environment for assessing students' learning	Principals	142	2.51	.70	2.31	.69	381	.12	.71
		Supervisors	240	2.13	.69					
2	make assessment procedures clear for all students in a class	Principals	142	2.60	.64	2.29	.66	381	.18	.69
		Supervisors	240	2.13	.68					
3	understand students' individual differences when designing an assessment	Principals	142	2.42	.62	2.59	.68	381	.19	.66
		Supervisors	240	2.60	.75					
4	understand the applicability and durability of the results of an assessment	Principals	142	2.26	.72	2.26	.66	381	.17	.60
		Supervisors	240	2.26	.60					
5	use evidence and data to make assessment decisions	Principals	142	2.21	.59	1.88	.58	381	.10	.79
		Supervisors	240	1.85	.57					
6	continuously assess students' learning in the classroom	Principals	142	2.30	.75	2.50	.72	381	.16	.67
		Supervisors	240	2.59	.70					
7	use continuous assessment for the improvement of performance	Principals	142	2.06	.72	2.16	.70	381	.20	.66
		Supervisors	240	2.26	.67					
8	be familiar with various assessment techniques	Principals	142	2.36	.62	2.63	.66	381	.13	.68
		Supervisors	240	2.60	.71					
9	make assessments that include the three learning domains	Principals	142	2.37	.54	2.18	.60	381	.11	.66
		Supervisors	240	1.99	.65					
10	provide timely feedback to students	Principals	142	2.41	.80	2.69	.79	381	.14	.58
		Supervisors	240	2.57	.59					
Aggregated results		Principals	142	2.36	.67	2.35	.67	381	.15	.67
		Supervisors	240	2.34	.66					

Besides, to recognize the roles of supervisors in supporting teachers to create an active and clear assessment environment for all students, the interviewed principals confirmed the following:

[...] in the current situation of the primary schools in my cluster, supervisors should support teachers to create an active assessment environment to involve all students

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in the classroom because many teachers in primary schools organized in my cluster including my school have limited skills in creating the diversified and active assessment environment for all students in the classroom (P2). However, a few supervisors rarely observe teachers in the classroom and suggest teachers create an inclusive and active assessment environment for all students (P2, and P5). Some supervisors had seen the teachers' annual, weekly, and lesson plans and suggested teachers make active and clear assessment environment procedures for all students in the classroom (P4).

On the other hand, the supervisors disclosed that:

[...] procedural and conducive assessment environment is very essential to effectively assess the students learning (S2). Sometimes I conduct classroom observation; I suggest teachers facilitate a conducive assessment environment for all students in the class depending on the ability and learning pace of students in the class (S4). The support I provide to teachers to create an active and clear assessment environment for all students in the classroom is not enough, (S1).

On the activities of supervisors supporting teachers to use various assessment techniques and provide timely feedback to students, P1, P2, and P5 in common disclosed that equipping teachers with different assessment skills requires to provide training for them. In this regard, supervisors do not provide on-the-job training for teachers in their schools. Besides, P3 and P6 noted the following:

[...] some supervisors in their supervision reports suggest the school leaders should support teachers to give timely feedback to their students (P3). Many supervisors do not conduct classroom observation; so, they do not know the frequency of teachers providing feedback to students in the classroom (P6).

On the other hand, the interviewed supervisors disclosed that it is very important to equip teachers with different assessment skills. One of the tools used to equip teachers with a variety of assessment techniques is in-service training; however, they are not providing the training to teachers on this dimension, because they didn't have a budget to conduct training.

Concerning support provided by supervisors to teachers that, continuous assessment for the performance improvement of students the interviewed principals noted:

[...] in conducting supervision activities in the schools, many supervisors refer to the continuous assessment record document whether or not teachers continuously assess their students (P1). If teachers may not use different assessments, supervisors write comments to teachers or schools to assess the students by using different assessment techniques (P4); many supervisors refer to the assessment record and provide comments to implement continuous assessment (P3); [...] my school supervisor doing

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nothing about the assessment call for the performance improvement of students or performance evaluation (P5).

The interviewed supervisors noted the following concerning the support provided by supervisors to teachers, assessment for performance improvement and the three domains of learning :

[...] during my school visit, I used the students' assessment records or mark lists, and then I provided comments and suggestions either for teachers or school leaders to support the teachers on the limitations I observed (S2). In reality, I am not considering the domains of the assessment, because domains of assessment depend on the contents of the lesson (S3). I am using assessment records (mark lists) whether or not teachers implement continuous assessment in the classroom, but I didn't think about the domain of learning in the assessment (S6).

Discussion

The participants perceived supervision practices to support teachers in creating optimistic learning behaviour among students in the classroom as unsatisfactory. In this study, one of the activities of the supervisors who were expected to support teachers in order to create optimistic learning behaviour in the classroom was intended to help the teachers connect and organize knowledge in the classroom, as the literature in the field indicates that many teachers in developing countries demonstrate a low level of pedagogical skills (UNESCO, 2015a; UNESCO, 2015b; World Bank, 2018). Thus, in the Ethiopian context, supervisors should provide extensive support to teachers to help them connect and organize the lesson to be presented (Eshetu, 2020), for without organization and contextualization, actual learning cannot happen.

The findings of this study are evidence that many supervisors in primary schools in Ethiopia are not giving teachers the proper support to enable them to identify their students' talents and learning styles and incorporate these in the design of instruction. In the teaching-learning process, the recognition of students' talent and learning styles plays a very significant role in the attainment of lesson objectives. When teachers identify the talents of their students, they can create a plan that will give them opportunities to exercise their talent and learning styles (whether visual, aural, or kinaesthetic) (Glickman, 2002). Thus, in the context of this study, supervisory support to teachers should be of paramount importance, because many teachers in primary schools have limited pedagogical skills and, in order to transform this concept into practice, they require sustainable support from supervisors (UNESCO, 2015b).

Another important contribution that this study makes to the field is that to create optimistic learning behaviour in the classroom, students should be more motivated to control their learning. In this regard, supervisors should provide intensive support to teachers in terms of how to motivate students to control their learning. Thus, in the existing setting of this study,

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supervisors must support teachers who have limited pedagogical skills to help them stimulate students' interest in self-directed learning. The reason behind this is that, when supervisors support teachers' activities in the school, teachers will be more motivated to use and intensify the use of various teaching strategies. They will also aspire to encourage self-directed learning among students and increase student participation in the classroom.

Teacher-student and student-student communication have a significant effect on the creation of optimistic learning behaviour in the classroom. However, this study finds that most primary school supervisors are not providing teachers with effective support for the enhancement of teacher-student and student-student interaction in the classroom. In the context of this study, supervisors should support teachers to facilitate teacher-student and student-student interaction in the teaching-learning process so as to create optimistic learning behaviour in the classroom, because frequent student-teacher and student-student interaction in the classroom is the most important factor in students being motivated and involved in a lesson (Bailey, 2006; Eshetu, 2020).

Depending on what the supervisor's perception is of their role in supporting teachers to help students engage in positive time management behaviour, this study finds that supervisors are not effective at supporting teachers. Additionally, they do not actively support and improve teachers' skills in handling various types of pupil behaviour in the classroom. In the context of this study in which many teachers had limited pedagogical skills, supervisory support is of great significance for creating a positive attitude toward time management, because learning to use one's time well is a crucial aspect of student achievement. For this reason, supervisors equip teachers with the skills to help students coordinate their schedules to manage tasks and handle the various types of pupil behaviour in the classroom (Eshetu, 2020; Glickman, 2002).

Another notable result from this study is that the primary school supervisors did not effectively equip teachers with a range of classroom management techniques. It is important to remember that optimal learning is promoted by well-organized and well-administered classroom environments. Effectively managed classrooms are orderly, have a minimum of student misbehaviour, and spend reasonable levels of time on task. In this regard, teachers as classroom leaders need to be more skilled at preventing disruptions from occurring in the first place (Edwards, Dattilio, & Bromley, 2004; Evertson & Emmer, 2009; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004). Thus, a supervisor is to equip teachers with the skills to manage the overall activities and behaviours of students in the classroom.

In the process of teaching and learning, assessment of students' learning occupies a central position when it comes to determining students' educational achievement. Bearing this in mind, this study has aimed to analyse the support provided by supervisors to teachers with less than tenable assessment skills. The study's findings indicate that most primary school supervisors are not successful at supporting teachers within the dimension of learning

assessment. In this dimension, one of the vital issues on which this study has focused is the need for supervisors to support teachers to enable them to create an active assessment environment for students in the classroom, as some teachers have limited assessment skills and techniques (Sawari, 2013; Sintayehu, 2016; Yigzaw, 2013). In support of this notion, Stiggins (2017) indicates that supervisors need to be able to build a balanced local assessment system to support and certify learning, continue to refine achievement standards, ensure local assessment accuracy, and balance local communication systems to support and certify learning, as well as to ensure a foundation of assessment literacy among teaching staff. In this regard, supervisors should encourage teachers to create a clear and active assessment environment in the classroom through practice, structured exercises, projects, and action research.

Another important finding of this study is that primary school teachers do not receive appropriate support from their supervisors in various assessment techniques and skills related to providing timely feedback to students. In the Ethiopian context, pedagogical skills and attitudinal change among teaching staff is impossible without guidance and support; thus supervisors should provide appropriate support to teachers and guide them in the practice of major assessment techniques (Glickman, 2002). This is because the teacher as the assessment expert should have sound skills and various assessment techniques, and assessment calls for performance improvements in the three domains of learning (Opposs et al., 2020; Sawari, 2013; Sintayehu, 2016; Yigzaw, 2013; Zamili et al., 2020).

Conclusion and implications

In respect of the study's findings within the dimension of learning behaviours, primary school supervisors in Ethiopia do not actively support teachers in the process of supervision practices. Bearing this in mind, this study concludes that supervisory support to teachers to enhance learning behaviours – such as by encouraging pupils to connect and organize knowledge, teaching multiple learning strategies, recognizing students' talent and learning styles, motivating students in self-learning activities – and to encourage teacher-student and student-student interaction, time management, handling of various types of pupil behaviour in the classroom and so on was not effective among teachers in primary schools in Ethiopia. This implies that in the Ethiopian educational system there is a need for a paradigm shift in supervision practices, with changes in policies and the orientation of supervision organization and management to make these more support-oriented.

In the participants' views as expressed in the questionnaires and interviews in the domain of learning assessment, supervisors are too far away from teachers to offer support in primary schools in Oromia, Addis Ababa, and the Southern Regional States of Ethiopia. Bearing this in mind, this study concludes that supervisory support to teachers in the domain of learning assessment, a vital pedagogical area in the teaching profession, is undermined. Supervision practices in primary schools in Ethiopia have not been support-oriented in terms of equipping

teachers with valuable pedagogical support aimed at improving the pedagogical competency of teachers in the system. As a result, the teaching-learning process has been adversely affected and is not quality-oriented. So, to enhance teacher competence in assessment procedures and techniques, supervisors should make a concerted effort to change the paradigm of supervision practices in education. Therefore, the author of this study suggests that the regional and federal governments of Ethiopia make adjustments to supervision policy and make supervision practices more support oriented.

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