

Research Article

Challenges of Instructional Supervision of Social Studies Lessons in the Public Basic Junior High Schools in Ghana

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges faced by School Improvement Support Officers, Headmasters and teachers during the instructional supervision of Social Studies lessons in the public basic junior high schools in the Aowin Municipality of the Western North Region of Ghana. The study adopted sequential explanatory research design. The population of the study included School Improvement Support Officers (SISOs), Headteachers and teachers of selected from Junior High Schools in Aowin Municipality of the Western North Region of Ghana. Purposive sampling technique was used to select ten (10) SISOs and sixty (60) Headteachers in the Aowin Municipality. Stratified, simple random and quota sampling technique was used to select one hundred and twenty (120) teachers for the study. The two main instruments used for data collection were questionnaire and interview guide. The quantitative data entry and analysis was done by using the SPSS version 22 software package. The data was edited, coded and analysed into frequencies, percentages with interpretations. The qualitative data was analysed by the use of the interpretative method. The study revealed that headteachers and School Improvement Support Officers (SISOs) faced challenges such as ; Poor road networks which affected planned supervision; Inability of district directorate to promptly, firmly and fairly acts upon reports from instructional supervision activities from supervisors; Lack of logistics for regular supervision; Insufficient up-to-date knowledge and skills for organizing instructional supervision; and Financial constraints. To overcome the challenges and poor supervisory techniques by headteachers and SISOs, it is recommended that these personnel should be oriented on modern trends in instructional supervision, provided with adequate and sufficient materials for instructional supervision, sufficient funds provided for organizing instructional supervision, the municipal directorate should fairly and firmly implement reports on instructional supervision activities and there should be good motivation package for supervisors to enable them to effectively perform their duties.

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1. Introduction

Education is considered the pillar of development in the world, and as such, it is recognized as a panacea to socio-economic development of all societies. Indeed, it is argued that the crucial role of education in the development of the individual and the society cannot be compromised [1]. This assertion is corroborated by a research that education, as an investment, results in good private and social returns and progress, making it essential for individual and national development [2]. This implies that every nation depends on education for development. Hence, if more people have access to education in a country, there is the probability that development of that country will be high. In view of this, countries all over the world are concerned about improving the quality of education. This concern is shared by a study that the core of motivation for educational reforms has become necessary as a result of the heightened interest in quality

education, and that achieving quality education is crucial in the strategic plans of developing countries to improve their economies [3].

A simple way of appreciating education is that it is a tool or a necessary weapon for every human being to acquire for the purpose of navigating this complex world without which the individual may get lost in it or live in darkness without being blind [4]. It is the biggest instrument for academic progress, social mobilization, political survival and effective national development of any country and constitutes the single largest enterprise in the country like Nigeria [5]. 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 [6]. 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 [7].

Improving the quality of education in Ghana, partly through the improvement of supervision has been a priority of the MoE and the GES. The government of Ghana introduced Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) in 1992 to make education accessible to all children of school age and to improve the quality of education delivery the FCUBE has three main components; improving the quality of teaching and learning; improving access and participation; and improving management efficiency [8]. The first and third components relate directly to the practice of supervision of instruction. Instructional supervision is mainly concerned with improving schools by helping teachers to reflect their practices, to learn more about what they do and why, and to develop professionally [9]. Various authors stated that instructional supervision has clear connection with professional development [9, 10]. Instructional supervision is a way to support professional growth and competency and has been identified as an integral component of staff development, not a separate activity [11]. Instructional supervision is the supervision carried out by the head teacher, subject heads, and other assigned supervisors in a school with the aim of providing guidance and support to teachers [12]. Instructional supervision as the continuous monitoring of classroom teaching with the aim of not only promoting professional practices, but also to enhance professional development in a collegial and collaborative style. Instructional supervision occurs in two main ways, namely: classroom observations (formal and informal) and portfolio supervision [10].

1.1. Instructional Supervision

Instructional supervision as the 'actions that enable teachers the quality to improve instruction for students' and as an act that improves relationships and meets both personal and organizational needs [13]. Instructional supervision as 'helping increase the opportunity and capacity of teachers and schools to contribute more effectively towards students' academic success' [9]. Instructional activities are designed to improve instruction at all levels of the school enterprise and as behaviour officially designed by the organization that directly affects teacher behaviour in such a way to facilitate pupil learning and achieve the goals of the organization. Instructional supervision is basically concerned with supporting and assisting teachers to improve instructions through changing their behaviour. The instructional supervisor does much than inspect. Instructional supervision is a service activity that exists to help teachers do their job better. The study revealed that instructional supervision promotes effective coaching, mentoring and training of teaching on the profession [14]. This implies that effective supervision enhances reinforcement of relationship between the headteacher, School Improvement Support Officer (SISO) and teachers during instructional supervision; making teaching

pleasurable and an enjoying practice [15]. Instructional supervision as a collaborative effort involving a set of activities designed to improve the teaching and learning process. The purpose of supervision is not to find fault or to punish, but rather to work cooperatively with the teacher. Supervision as the element of the administrative process is concerned with efforts to guide the day-to-day activities of the work group by stimulating, directing and coordinating the workers and their efforts, cultivating good working personal relationships so that they all work towards a more efficient achievement of the task goal [16].

1.2. Challenges Instructional Supervision

Instructional supervisors face many challenges as they carry out their instructional roles in the schools. The challenges range from material resources, professionalism, management of staff and inter-relationship. A study found out that instructional supervisors did not give regular and adequate support to teachers in professional and curriculum development, did not give training to teachers either in pedagogical issues or in importance of instructional supervision, and spent their time performing administrative tasks instead of more support time in academic tasks [17]. Other studies also revealed that instructional supervisors encountered various challenges that hindered effective implementation in of instructional supervision. These challenges include problem in selecting and assigning right officers as instructional supervisors, lack of instructional supervision manuals, inadequate finances, facilities and materials. Others are resistance of teachers to supervision as a result of lack of awareness for teachers in importance of instructional supervision, excessive workloads of headteachers and SISOs, and lack of right training for supervisors. Similar challenges faced in the implementation of instructional supervision in schools [12, 18,19]

Instructional supervision is a service provided by supervisors to help teachers discharge their professional skills in order to improve teaching and learning [20]. However, there are several challenges that affect the effective provision of instructional supervision in the areas of teaching practice, training, support and educational resources, among others. One of the key objectives of instructional supervision is to improve the quality of learner's education by improving the teacher's effectiveness in instruction. Improvement depends upon teachers' attitudes towards supervision, and that unless teachers perceive supervision as a process of promoting their professional growth and student learning, the supervisory exercise is bound to fail [21]. Inadequate time spent on supervision by supervisors is one of the key challenges due to multiple roles that the supervisors have to perform as part of their administrative duties [22]. The attitude of teachers towards instructional supervisors most likely depends on the approach and type of instructional supervision offered at a given stage. They give an example of fault-finding and evaluative approach both of which they maintain are most likely to result in teachers viewing supervision negatively and as a result creating lack of trust in supervision undertaken by the supervisor. The negative attitude and dissatisfaction of teachers toward instructional supervision also depends on the supervisor-teacher relationship as well as methods and approaches of supervision used in order to assist teachers' needs [23].

Lack of good supervisor-teacher relationship causes a great challenge to effective instructional supervision [24]. Supervisor's work including irregular and bad planning of visits, inadequate time spent in the classroom on supervision, and inappropriate advice offered by supervisors, are among the key issues in instructional supervision characterized by negative attitude by teachers on the exercise. The authors also note and warned that teachers strongly dislike the classic faultfinding approach by the supervisors, and that teachers expect to be treated as professionals and the specific realities of the school environment be taken into account when supervisors provide advice during their supervisory visits [25]. A study conducted on "The contribution of clinical supervision on teachers' satisfaction: the case of Homecho secondary and preparatory school in Hadya

zone” 458 randomly selected secondary school teachers in Ethiopia, frequency analysis was used which revealed that over 70% of the teachers reported that they were strongly dissatisfied with instructional supervision offered to them, 36% to 60% also reported that the supervision done by instructional supervisors was below average. The teachers lamented that instructional supervisors do not offer opportunity for frequent interactions and rapport with teachers. The study therefore, recommended that in addition to frequent interaction and positive rapport; teachers also need positive motivation and recognition from the supervisors [26].

However, lack of communication between teachers and instructional supervisors, is also a major inhibitor to instructional supervision. They further note that, when instructional supervisors and teachers perceive supervision differently there is bound to be friction and conflict emanating from the exercise. In contrast, when an instructional supervisor and a teacher make decisions objectively on the approach on instructional supervision together as colleagues, there is more likely to be mutual agreement [27, 28]. This phase of supervision is seen as the most challenging and one that other problems arise [13]. Poor communication between instructional supervisors and teachers contribute significantly to failure in instructional supervision. He further highlights that, with poor communication between instructional supervisors and teachers, some teachers see supervision as a tool used to control and intimidate them [27]. A study of Turkish private schools, there was no significant relationship between lack of communication between instructors and teachers as far as classroom teaching was concerned, what was necessary was how communication was conducted. On the same study, some teachers felt that supervision was an intrusion into their private instructional practices. They claimed that the principal’s intrusive monitoring and physical presence changed the setting in the classrooms and that this resulted in false impressions resulting in an element of stress and overreaction, on the part of the teachers and the students during classroom observations [29].

Instructional supervisors are persons who are promoted from other positions, for instance, former teachers who are supposed to have excelled in their teaching. This underlies an assumption that since they were good teachers, then they are going to be good supervisors. Hence, there is no need for them to undergo training. Instructional supervision therefore, can only be seen to be effective when there is continuous training for both principals as instructional supervisors and teachers [27]. Knowledge and experience also play an important role in instructional supervision and characterizes most increasing issues and several challenges that emanate from discharging instructional supervisory services, including the possession of some working experiences that enable the supervisor to provide the necessary assistance, guidance, and support services to teachers for quality classroom instructions [13, 30]. Holland is particularly more categorical that instructional supervisors must show evidence that they have the necessary knowledge and experience to make important decisions about instructions. In addition, he argued that the instructional supervisor must also show evidence in the form of degrees and diplomas, so as to inspire teachers’ trust [30]. It is a common belief that academic qualifications and long-term working experience provide people with knowledge to be able to perform satisfactorily in an establishment. Schools have not set minimum qualifications as a benchmark to be attained by instructional supervisors, but only minimum teaching qualifications that differ from country to country in Africa. Baffour-Awuah stresses that, instructional supervisors should “have higher qualifications than teachers or at worst, at par with them so that they will be able to provide them with the necessary guidance and support” [31].

In addition, SISOs are challenged by the un-cooperative attitudes of teachers in the form of unpreparedness to write lesson notes, inefficient use of teaching hours, lateness and absenteeism [32]. Some school supervision challenges include student and teacher examination malpractices, high school dropout rates, and mass movements of students

from schools [33]. In some cases, principals do not involve teachers in formulating school rules and providing new teachers with mentorship to facilitate supportive induction [34]. 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 [35, 36].

Although the government of Ghana is focused on improving the supervision of instruction in schools, much still needs to be done. Informal discussion among people in society, and related research findings suggest that poor pupil performance in public schools, to some extent, is the result of ineffective supervision of teachers. It is revealed that Schools Improvement Support Officers (SISOs) and headmasters do not visit schools they supervise to regularly monitor teaching and learning [37]. Basically, problems militating against effective supervision are: supervisors not being mobile, economic constraints make supervisors and teachers face the problem of making ends meet, lack of confidence, low academic qualification, and infrequent continuous professional development training for supervisors, headmasters, teachers; and some supervisors not able to demonstrate in teaching, but always admonishing teachers towards effective teaching [8].

The nature and quality of instructional supervision within junior high schools (JHS) in the Aowin Municipality is presumed to be relatively poor. Over the years, school supervisors, including headteachers and SISOs, have incurred the wrath of the public in the Aowin Municipality. They have been blamed for lowering standards of academic performance of pupils in public basic schools. This is because there is a challenge with the practices of subject-area, including Social Studies instructional supervision in junior high schools within the Municipality. The subject-area instructional supervision practiced in basic schools by headteachers is exposed with multiple problems such as lack of adequate support to newly deployed or beginning teachers, less frequent use of classroom visits and peer coaching by instructional supervisors, focus of such supervisors on administrative matters than on academic issues, and less mutual professional trust between supervisors and teachers. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to better understand the challenges in the practice of instructional supervision of Social Studies lessons in junior high schools by School Improvement Support Officers, and headmasters in the Aowin municipality. The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges faced by School Improvement Support Officers and Headmasters during the instructional supervision of Social Studies teachers in public basic junior high schools in the Aowin Municipality of the Western North Region of Ghana. The study sought to answer the research question- What challenges do School Improvement Support Officers, headmasters and teachers face in the instructional supervision of Social Studies lessons?

2. Materials and methods

The study adopted sequential explanatory research design. The population of the study included School Improvement Support Officers (SISOs), Headteachers and teachers of selected from Junior High Schools in Aowin Municipality of the Western North Region of Ghana. Purposive sampling technique was used to select ten (10) SISOs and sixty (60) Headteachers in the Aowin Municipality. Stratified, simple random and quota sampling technique was used to select one hundred and twenty (120) teachers for the study. The two main instruments used for data collection were questionnaire and interview guide. The quantitative data entry and analysis was done by using the SPSS version 22 software package. The data was edited, coded and analysed into frequencies, percentages with interpretations. The qualitative data was analysed by the use of the interpretative method.

3. Results and Discussions

This section of the study presents challenges SISOs, head teachers and teachers face in the instructional supervision of Social Studies. respondents were entreated to respond to the extent to which they disagreed or agreed to the statements in the questionnaire with respect to challenges they faced. The results are represented in [Table 1](#)

Table 1. Challenges School Improvement Support Officers (SISOs) face during instructional supervision of Social Studies teachers

S/N	Statements	Mean	Standard deviation
1	I receive sufficient funds for organising instructional supervision regularly.	1.10	0.32
2	I have up-to-date knowledge and skills for organising instructional supervision.	2.30	0.48
3	The Municipality directorate promptly, firmly and fairly acts upon reports from instructional supervision activities.	2.30	0.48
4	I have adequate and appropriate materials for instructional supervision.	2.10	0.74
5	I am able to supervise my supervisees as regularly as planned for the academic year.	1.10	0.32

Source: Field work, 2021

Statistics from [Table 1](#) indicate the responses of SISOs on the challenges they faced in the instructional supervision of Social Studies. Apparently, most of the respondents articulated their views that they do not have sufficient funds for organising instructional supervision regularly ($M = 1.10$, $SD = 0.32$). This implies that SISOs lacked financial support to organise their activities. Also, it was discovered from the study that the respondents disagreed with the fact that they have up-to-date knowledge and skills for organizing instructional supervision ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 0.48$). In addition, majority of respondents disagreed with the fact that the Municipality directorate promptly, firmly and fairly acts upon reports from instructional supervision activities ($M = 2.30$ $SD = 0.48$). However, the findings also indicate that respondents disagreed with the fact that they are able to supervise supervisees as regularly as planned for the academic year ($M = 1.10$, $SD = 0.32$). Likewise, the study required responses from headteachers on challenges they faced in the instructional supervision of Social Studies, as shown in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Challenges headteachers face in the instructional supervision of Social Studies

S/N	Statements	Mean	Standard deviation
1	I receive sufficient funds for organising instructional supervision regularly.	2.16	0.37
2	I have up-to-date knowledge and skills for organising instructional supervision.	2.06	0.75
3	The Municipality directorate promptly, firmly and fairly acts upon reports from instructional supervision activities.	2.15	0.58
4	I have adequate and appropriate materials for instructional supervision.	1.46	0.80
5	I am able to supervise my supervisees as regularly as planned for the academic year.	2.39	0.76

Source: Field work, 2021

It is found on [Table 2](#) that headteachers confirmed from the study that they do not have enough funds for organising instructional supervision regularly ($M = 2.16$, $SD = 0.37$).

Again, respondents reported that they do not have up-to-date knowledge and skills for organizing instructional supervision ($M = 2.06$, $SD = 0.75$). Regarding the statement soliciting head teachers' responses on whether the Municipality directorate promptly, firmly and fairly acts upon reports from instructional supervision activities, quite a large number of respondents disagreed with the statement ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 0.58$). Furthermore, respondents noted that they do not have adequate and appropriate materials for instructional supervision ($M = 1.46$, $SD = 0.80$). Again, they sought views from teachers with respect to challenges head teachers and SISOs face in the instructional supervision of Social Studies are shown in the [Table 3](#).

Table 3. Teachers' responses to Challenges headteachers and SISOs face in the instructional supervision of Social Studies

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
The Municipality directorate promptly, firmly and fairly acts upon reports from instructional supervision activities from supervisors.	2.35	0.66
My supervisors come to supervise me with adequate and appropriate materials for instructional supervision.	2.30	0.46
My supervisors always commend the Municipality for providing sufficient funds for organizing instructional supervision regularly.	2.18	0.38
My supervisors have up-to-date knowledge and skills for instructional supervision.	2.14	0.35
The road networks affects the planned supervision from my supervisor regularly as planned for the academic year.	2.10	0.30

Source: Field work, 2021

Results from [Table 3](#) indicate that teachers disagreed with the fact that the Municipality directorate promptly, firmly and fairly acts upon reports from instructional supervision activities from supervisors ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 0.66$). Also, teachers affirmed that their supervisors do not come to supervise them with adequate and appropriate materials for instructional supervision ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 0.46$). More so, concerning the supervisors always commending the Municipality for providing sufficient funds for organizing instructional supervision regularly, the respondents disagreed with the statement ($M = 2.18$, $SD = 0.35$). In addition, teachers averred that the road networks do not affect the planned supervision of supervisors regularly as planned for the academic year ($M = 2.10$, $SD = 0.30$).

Finally, in order to support the responses from the respondents from the questionnaires to find out the challenges faced by head teachers and SISOs in their quest of providing instructional supervision in Social Studies, the researcher tried to find out from the 10 SISOs how funds become obstacles in carrying out their activities in the Aowin Municipality. It was revealed by seven of the participants that the unavailability of funds or inadequate funds have made it impossible for the SISOs to purchase logistics and materials for the activities. All to seven participants opined that due to inadequate funds their School Improvement Support Officers (SISOs) are unable to give feedback to the teachers they supervised. They further accepted that it has resulted to the situation where the SISOs are unable to embark on effective and frequent monitoring.

Three of the participants also revealed that inadequate funds for supervisors in the Aowin Municipality has demotivated some SISOs to carry out an effective supervision. All the participants accepted that the situation has led the situation where some SISOs accept bribes and this made them to be corrupt. For instance, one of the participants commented that *"Since we lack funds some of us have become corrupt. We are not motivated to carry out our activities because the funds are not available"* (52-year-old male SISO).

In order to probe on the challenges faced by SISOs and head teachers the researcher again tried to find out from the participants how prompt response of the Municipality to issues during supervision affect their work in the Municipality. It was revealed by all the 10 participants that emergency and prompt responses of the Municipality to issues enhances output of teachers since it establishes rapport between the supervisors and their supervisees. The participants agreed that prompt responses to issues they face help teachers to be up and doing since they are motivated to carry out their supervisory roles effectively which ultimately improves students' academic performance. The researcher also tried to find out from the participants if they are able to effectively and regularly supervise their supervisees as they plan in an academic year. From the responses, it was revealed by eight participants that they are unable to engage in an effective supervision due to lack of funds. Two of the participants accepted that they are able to conduct supervision but use their own resources in doing so.

In a nutshell, the findings from the study indicate that most challenges faced by headteachers and School Improvement Support Officers (SISOs) in discharging their duties, financial constraints which lead to inability to procure logistics and materials, as well as inability to motivate head and SISOs. Also, due to challenges encounter by head teachers and SISOs they were not able to organize instructional supervision regularly. They were also not able to supervise their supervisees as regularly as planned for the academic year. These findings are in consonance with a previous study that owing to the lack of official vehicles, supervisors have to rely on public means of transport [8]. In this case, schools in the very remote areas may not be visited for many months if not for a whole year. Officers who are able to travel to the schools use their own money expecting reimbursement shortly after that. Usually, such reimbursement is deferred until quarterly government subventions are paid. These subventions are sometimes delayed or are seen as inadequate to cater for full refund of monies spent. previous studies supported the current study that instructional supervisors did not give regular and adequate support to teachers in professional and curriculum development, did not give training to teachers either in pedagogical issues or in importance of instructional supervision, and spent their time performing administrative tasks instead of more support time in academic tasks. Their study also revealed that instructional supervisors encountered various challenges that hindered effective implementation in of instructional supervision. These challenges include problem in selecting and assigning right officers as instructional supervisors, lack of instructional supervision manuals, inadequate finances, facilities and materials. Others are resistance of teachers to supervision as a result of lack of awareness for teachers in importance of instructional supervision, excessive workloads of headteachers and SISOs, and lack of right training for supervisors. Similar challenges faced in the implementation of instructional supervision in schools [9, 12-19].

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study revealed that the challenges headteachers and circuit supervisors face in the instructional supervision of Social Studies included:

- Poor road networks affect the planned supervision.
- Inability of district directorate to promptly, firmly and fairly acts upon reports from instructional supervision activities from supervisors.
- Lack of logistics for regular supervision.
- Lack of up-to-date knowledge and skills for organizing instructional supervision.
- Financial constraints.

In other to overcome the challenges and poor supervisory techniques by headteachers and SISOs, it is recommended that these personnel should be oriented on modern trends in instructional supervision, provided with adequate and sufficient materials for instructional supervision, sufficient funds provided for organizing

instructional supervision, the municipal directorate should fairly and firmly implement reports on instructional supervision activities and there should be good motivation package for supervisors to enable them to effectively perform their duties. It is also recommended that in order to lessen the problems facing the supervisors, funds should be released on time by the authorities concerned for the supervisors to perform. Imprest for the heads should be released on time to the heads to buy all the logistics needed for their work. Funds should also be released to SISOs to fuel their motorbikes so that they can be mobile at all times. Motorbikes should be provided for SISOs who do not own them in order that they will be able to visit their schools regularly to supervise teachers' work and to give support to the heads. Maintenance allowances should also be paid to the SISOs to maintain their motorbikes. This will facilitate their regularity in schools to give professional advice to teachers.

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