

A School-based Management and Supervision Model in EFL Schools

Suleyman Davut Goker
suleyman.goker [at] emu.edu.tr

[Eastern Mediterranean University](#) (Gazimagusa, Turkey)

This article offers a school-based reflective management model in EFL schools that centers on reflective practice for EFL teachers and administrators drawing on four bodies of literature (reflective thinking, supervision, teacher inquiry in EFL context and organizational learning). I introduce "reflective management and supervision" and the terms "management" and "supervision" are used interchangeably to describe the broadest contexts in which I advance the concept of the teacher and administrator as both reflective practitioner and instructional leader and take school administrator as a "non-managerial" "consultative" curriculum developer/supervisor, and head learner.

Introduction

Teachers and school administrators, as other learners, develop and change from the inside out, through individual practice and reflection, and from the outside in, through contact with the experiences and theories of others. Growth is the most important variable in this process. Growth can be reached through reflection and open learning environments where people are critical friends.

Reflective phenomena have three major elements that foster teachers' reflective thinking: cognitive, narrative, and critical. The cognitive element fosters concern regarding broad teaching principles as well as strategies of classroom management and organization that appear to transcend subject matter (Shulman, 1987, p. 9). This element coincides with the most personal form of reflective practice—the "inner dialog" a teacher has with herself or himself. The narrative element of reflection puts the classroom experience into a context for teachers and others, thus providing them with a much richer understanding of what takes place in the classroom and in the teachers' construction of reality and it is one of the more effective ways to encourage developmentally and culturally appropriate reflective practice.

Why Management and Supervision in EFL Schools Seem to Have Failed?

EFL teachers mostly complain about their administrators as they primarily focus on administrative duties rather than instructional and academic support. Thus, the image of instructional leadership has become entrenched in the professional rhetoric but all too often is lacking in administrative practice.

Although much research was conducted on collaboration and on the importance viewing teachers as professionals and reflective practitioners, little of the research has focused specifically on what administrators need to do and how they should be involved in those reflective practices. In this model three tools, which are reflective journals, portfolios and peer coaching are highly recommended for both the administrator and EFL teacher as we presuppose that they are learners and critical friends.

Leaving aside all the above-mentioned factors, the EFL context itself has highly different characteristics from the other subject area teaching

What Makes EFL Contexts Different and Why Do They Need Reflective Management?

EFL teaching market addresses a huge area where there are countries from East Europe to Far East and the number of EFL

teachers is much larger than any other subject area teachers.

A noted gap in the foreign language teaching profession has been underutilization of findings from the general teacher education knowledge base (Richards, 1996).

In 1990, Jarvis and Taylor issued the call for teacher educators in both general education and in specific fields to bridge the existing gap between general teacher education and content specific teacher education and this call was repeated by the foreign language teacher educators (Hammadou, 1991; Richards, 1990) as the field has achieved a sense of autonomy with its own research agenda.

Seven main components, which are absolutely different from those of other subject area teaching, are considered in the EFL curriculum evaluation process; managerial practice has proven not to be effective evaluating these components (Goker, 2004. p.133).

1. Teachers: The definition of 'EFL' teacher seems to change every day. With little exception, most non-native English speaking countries employ a native English speaker to teach English provided that person presents any degree from his country's university. That degree may range from Science with a major in Botany, to psychology. In other words, anyone with a university degree can travel to a non-English speaking country and become a 'teacher of English language'. (Carmichael, 2002)

One must briefly consider certificates, such as TEFL certificates or the like (the market place is now amply endowed with short term certificate courses) yet some courses are of minimal duration. I argue the possession of such a certificate does not entitle the holders to call themselves (qualified) English teachers and teaching English is severely hampered by the fact that teachers are on the whole, nonspecifically educated teachers.

2. Methodology: Methodology is considered to be the main variable in implementing the curriculum and it can be characterized as the materials, activities, tasks, and learning experiences selected by the teacher.

In no other subject area of teaching has there been so much material to choose from including textbooks, online teaching tasks, handouts and activities. There are thousands of web pages for EFL teachers. Many EFL researchers question the value of commercially-produced textbooks as they are designed with an eye to sales. Most are published in Britain and America and many EFL teachers complain that they do not include cultural values of their home countries.

3. Learners and needs analysis: Goal analysis, performance analysis, environment analysis, task analysis, content analysis, resource analysis and needs analysis make EFL teaching differentiate from the other subject area teaching. All curricula are firstly developed on needs analysis. Needs are associated with individual learners, as they change and shift during the period of a course, needs are best addressed at the level of classroom instruction, where an EFL teacher can select appropriate techniques and materials to accommodate individuals. And this places the teacher at the center of the decision making process. In no other subject area, is the teacher in such a complex situation like this.

4. Goals and objectives: Goals and objectives are quite varied in EFL schools and rarely are goals set, or situations and roles devised that are appropriate for foreign language learners. Some focus on EAP (English for Academic Purposes), some focus on ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and some others on communicative competence. There is no consensus yet on what communicative competence is and the validity of the pedagogical model based on the native speaker-based notion of communicative competence is questioned by researchers in the field. The notion of communicative competence entails four competences, which are commonly referred to as grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. However, managerial practices in EFL settings seem to have focused on grammatical competence.

5. Syllabus: Types of syllabi are so complex and each EFL school has different syllabus type like grammatical, lexical, grammatical-lexical, situational, topic-based, notional, functional-notional, mixed or "multi-strand", procedural, process.

6. Assessment and evaluation process: What does language proficiency encompass? Unfortunately, it is at this point in the

assessment of language proficiency that a lack of consensus begins. Language researchers openly acknowledge this dilemma. The complexity of language and the lack of consensus as to the exact nature of language proficiency are critical for one fundamental reason. Each language proficiency test should be based on a defensible model or definition of language proficiency. Each EFL school uses a different checklist for English language proficiency test selection. Many different types of tests like proficiency, achievement, placement, diagnostic tests are administered in EFL schools which you can hardly see in any other subject area teaching.

7. Resources: The amount and kind of resources available are important, but especially important is the way they are allocated. In EFL programs, the assignment of teachers to classes is one of the most challenging considerations in resource allocation. In EFL teaching, more resources such as a CALL or audio-visual laboratory, T.V., tapes, and so on, are needed than for any other subject area teaching.

Tools for Reflective Process in an EFL School-based Management

As learning from practical professional experience is an essential part of reflective practice, three valuable tools, which are reflective journals, portfolios, and peer coaching for both EFL teachers and administrators are recommended.

1. Reflective Journals

Causing teachers to reflect on clinical experiences can improve the quality of significant learning. Teaching experiences during clinical practice are helpful in preparing new teachers, but reflecting on the experience adds a critical dimension.

Each reflective-journal entry addresses at least two different topics: a personal reflection of their experiences in the clinical setting that day and a discussion related to the assigned topic for each day of the school visit. Assigned topics for the reflective journals range from observing the cooperating teachers' use of time management, classroom management, assessment procedures, cultural diversity, accommodations for disabled students with special needs, course-of-study requirements, and code-of-conduct handbooks. Additionally, the teachers write about topics or events important to them during a particular classroom visit. Teachers write reflections about what concerned them or excited them, or caused them to think, or caused them to learn.

2. Portfolios

The professional development portfolio has surfaced as a transitional tool, connecting the teaching-learning endeavors of the teachers as learner, teacher as expert, and teacher as scholar. We also realized that monitoring and managing one's own professional development is not only challenging, but also has the potential to change the culture of schools and make them a place for teachers to be lifelong learners. Through collaboration with teachers and administrators, portfolios can be used to improve existing practices for profess.

In this model, the portfolio is considered a living document that changes as the EFL teachers grow and that helps them develop their techniques and philosophy. In an EFL school, portfolios may include performance markers such as content, learners and learning, curriculum, instruction, assessment, management, diversity, professionalism, reflection, communication, and technology.

Teachers are encouraged to include artifacts and reflections from all of the dimensions of the program implemented program in their portfolios. This structure provides administrators and teachers with access to a comprehensive evaluation model that captures many aspects of the complexities of teaching and the process of teachers developing expertise. The administrator guides the teachers in developing the teaching portfolio.

3. Peer Coaching

Peer coaching can be an important means for instituting collaborative efforts and it warrants consideration as a potentially serviceable solution for improving teacher effectiveness.

Hoy, Hannum and Moran (1998) have argued that, when teachers are supported by their peers as well as their principals, they are likely to take greater risks to improve their instruction, remain in the teaching profession and show more interest in building activities and goals. Indeed, support and commitment are linked and have been shown to be critical aspect of effective schools (Hoy, Tarter, & Witkoskie, 1992). Timely feedback after teaching episodes, which is believed to be key factor in teacher development is often ignored under traditional supervisory practices. To reconcile this problem, researchers have considered peer coaching as an alternative model. Peer coaching is a process in which teams of teachers regularly observe each other to provide suggestions, assistance, and support (Joyce and Showers, 1980).

Garmston (1989) describes three assumptions that underlie peer coaching. The first is that we can get better at what we are doing. Second, teaching performance is driven by invisible thinking or mental processes that we use before, during, and after our teaching. Third, teaching is a continuous decision-making.

Reflective Supervision and Teacher Commitment

This type of reflective management sees schools as communities rather than organizations, and emphasizes the student-teacher relationship rather than bureaucratic functions. The ultimate goal of reflective supervision is to open the doors for teacher inquiry, a teacher-administrator-driven form of professional growth, to unfold in an EFL school.

This re-conceptualized meaning of supervision includes reconfigured supervision roles and relationships. EFL schools can begin to challenge an embedded traditional 'top-down,' hierarchical paradigm, with the teachers at the bottom as passive recipients of training.

This model can illustrate one way that administrators and teachers can work together without any outsider super "visor" to create a trusting, collaborative school culture that supports reflective teaching and reflective supervision. Something is wrong with the word "Supervisor." Is it a super or special person? In educational organizations, there should be no superiority of one individual in relation to others.

This view of supervision is consistent as well with recent perspectives on site-based management and school restructuring, the importance of building collaborative cultures and organizational learning communities in schools, and the systemic nature and meaning of school-wide organizational change and improvement. Collectively, these perspectives suggest a much richer cultural view of supervision that reflects the kinds of professional learning environments and organizational climates that teachers and administrators create and sustain in schools where teachers will monitor and adjust learning environments.

Conclusion

Language teaching professionals need to know where they are and where they are going. EFL schools need to develop a policy, and manage this in relation to their resources; they need to ensure that they and the people in them can change and develop.

Changes in EFL teaching have been happening at ever-faster rates and in ever-increasing complexity. Innovations are offered up for adoption; some are accepted while others are not. Curriculum reforms have been handed down from education ministries, IT innovations are being applied at all levels, research from many disciplines is informing classroom-based innovations, and action research is becoming more commonplace, with resulting transformations of teachers at the local level. All these are linked to a paradigm shift resulting in a greater focus on reflective practice rather than on methods and methodology.

Involvement in reflective-based managerial activities will contribute to the development of educators' perceptions of the nature and quality of the total school climate and these perceptions, in turn, are linked in important ways to school organizations and educational outcomes.

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