

An inquiry into the integration of clinical supervision to improve the quality of novice teachers for efficient pedagogical experience

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates how clinical supervision can be integrated to improve the quality of novice teachers for a more effective teaching and learning experience. It is undeniable that the quality of education largely relies on the competencies of teachers. To achieve quality education, it is essential to have qualified and proficient teachers. Adequate training should provide opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills. It has been noted that there is a decline in quality of education. Among various contributory factors, the proficiency of teachers stands out as a significant element. (Sarma, Licht, and Kalugalagedera, 2018). Furthermore, (Sultana et al., 2009) accurately assert that increased teacher quality results in elevated educational quality. Clinical supervision, typically associated with the medical profession, is now being applied within the education sector, especially in teacher training programs. This research was conducted as an experimental study involving two groups of teacher trainees, The control and did not receive any guideline, but worked under normal conditions, while the experimental group was observed after being treated with clinical supervision. Data was collected and analyzed. The findings indicated that the target group demonstrated significant improvement compared to the control group. Their success was also reflected in the students' performance levels. The supportive, trust-building, non-stressful, and assistance-focused nature of clinical supervision presents an effective strategy to elevate both teacher performance and student success through effective clinical supervisory practices.

Keywords: Clinical Supervision, Education, Novice Teachers, Training, Quality, Efficacy.

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INTRODUCTION

In a time when knowledge is viewed as the key driver of societal advancement, the importance of education has reached unprecedented levels. Education goes beyond merely transmitting information; it acts as a driving force for individual development, social progress, and the collective growth of countries. Nevertheless, the success of education is not solely based on curricula and resources but is largely dependent on the people responsible for delivering it—the teachers. Consequently, the quality of education is greatly influenced by the quality of teaching (Sultana et al., 2009).

Teachers serve as the builders of future leaders, imparting knowledge, values, and skills to the upcoming generation. They have a crucial influence on the intellectual and emotional growth of students, reaching beyond the conventional classroom environment. An effective education system necessitates teachers who not only have a strong grasp of their subjects but also possess the teaching skills to motivate and support students in achieving academic success.

A key aspect of effective teaching is the approach to teacher training, particularly in fostering the right mindset in addition to subject knowledge. Recently, clinical supervision has played a transformative role in the professional development of teachers. Engaging with teachers in a more democratic and collaborative manner, while helping them adopt the most suitable teaching practices instead of focusing on their shortcomings or being overly critical, has positively impacted their ability to fulfill their roles (Veloo, Komuji and Khalid, 2013).

Additionally, effective teaching goes beyond simply knowing the subject matter. It involves engaging and inspiring students, accommodating their individual learning preferences, and

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cultivating a welcoming and supportive classroom environment. Competent educators utilize a variety of teaching strategies, adjusting their methods to fulfill the varied needs of learners. They excel at recognizing students' strengths and areas for improvement, offering timely feedback and personalized assistance to optimize learning results. (Hoshiarpur, 2015). Moreover, effective teaching fosters overall growth by supporting students' social and emotional health. Educators serve not just as teachers but also as mentors and role models. They establish secure environments where students can share their thoughts, build resilience, and develop crucial social competencies. Through their guidance, teachers convey values like empathy, respect, and integrity, helping to mold responsible and compassionate individuals who can contribute positively to society.

In summary, the importance of high-quality teaching in achieving quality education is significant. Proficient teachers have mastery of their subjects, engage and inspire students, encourage critical thinking, and support holistic growth. They are fundamental to an education system that prepares students with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in a complex and interconnected world. To secure the future of coming generations, prioritizing investment in quality teaching is essential for educational



institutions and policymakers. To enhance these initiatives and make them more effective, integrating clinical supervision into teacher training programs can yield significant advantages. In this context, novice teachers who enter the teaching field after their teacher training, with such a mindset and effectiveness, will become invaluable assets to any nation.

Research Problem

Pre-service teacher training in Sri Lanka, initiated with the establishment of National Colleges of Education in 1985, aimed at improving the quality of teaching and the teaching process by ensuring that trained teachers graduate from these institutions. This initiative was introduced to address the shortcomings identified in teachers graduating from Teacher Training Colleges (Nanayakkara & Neumann, 2015). A primary goal of this new approach was to develop skilled teachers who would provide superior service, thereby contributing to an enhancement in quality. In this framework, teacher trainees receive both theoretical education and practical experience under the guidance of NCoE lecturers, following the directives set forth by the Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Education. The internship segment, which every teacher trainee participates in during their third year at a designated school, plays a crucial role in shaping their future employment opportunities. It serves as the groundwork for applying theoretical knowledge in real-life scenarios. Throughout this period, these trainees are primarily overseen by their mentors, selected based on their qualifications, experience, and seniority. Additionally, NCoE lecturers conduct supervision visits once or twice a month, depending on the number of trainees assigned to them, the number of schools involved, and the travel distance from the NCoE or their home. The supervisory practices employed by supervisors during teacher training within the Sri Lankan context require greater attention. Notably, pre-service teacher trainees from NCoEs frequently undergo supervision during their teaching practice and internship period, yet it is evident that traditional supervisory methods continue to be predominant among many mentors and some NCoE lecturers. This reliance on outdated practices adversely affects the professional development of teacher trainees, as they struggle to enhance their pedagogical skills. Several factors contribute to this issue. One reason is the absence of an effective system to educate and equip teachers with contemporary educational trends. Another contributory factor may be the lack of enthusiasm among supervisors to adopt innovative approaches instead of sticking to traditional methods (Gursory, E. et al., 2016).

Due to this, teacher trainees awaiting entry into the teaching profession often receive little more than criticism and fault-finding from their mentors. Many mentors believe their role is limited to observing the internees' lessons at their school, providing comments on the lesson plan, and ultimately assigning grades. Specifically, qualities such as negotiation, a democratic atmosphere, friendly discussions, encouraging comments, motivation, and praise are seldomly encountered. The outcome of this approach is the creation of a homogeneous group of teachers who conform to the existing system. To ensure quality in the teaching and learning process, which can help learners achieve higher levels of success while also promoting professional development for teachers and mentors, it is crucial to address the gap between traditional supervisory practices and the need for more effective supervisory tools.

Aims of the Research

Pre-service teacher training in Sri Lanka began with the establishment of National Colleges of Education in 1985, with the goal of enhancing the quality of teaching and the teaching process by ensuring graduates from these institutions are well-trained. This initiative was launched to remedy the deficiencies found in teachers graduating from Teacher Training Colleges (Nanayakkara & Neumann, 2015). A primary objective of this new approach was to produce skilled educators who could deliver better service, thus contributing to an overall improvement in quality. Within this framework, teacher trainees receive theoretical instruction and hands-on experience under the mentorship of NCoE lecturers, adhering to the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Education. The internship phase, which every teacher trainee undertakes in their third year at a designated school, is vital in determining their future job prospects. It lays the foundation for applying theoretical concepts in practical situations. During this time, trainees are mainly guided by their mentors, who are chosen based on their qualifications, experience, and seniority. Furthermore, NCoE lecturers make supervision visits once or twice a month, depending on the number of interns assigned to them, the schools involved, and the distance from the NCoE or their residences. The supervisory practices utilized by supervisors in the context of teacher training in Sri Lanka warrant further attention. It is important to note that pre-service teacher trainees from NCoEs are often supervised during their teaching practice and internship periods, but traditional supervisory approaches remain prevalent among several mentors and some NCoE lecturers. This dependence on outdated methods negatively impacts the professional growth of teacher trainees, who find it challenging to improve their teaching skills. Multiple factors contribute to this situation. One reason is the lack of an effective system to educate and prepare teachers for modern educational trends. Additionally, a lack of motivation among supervisors to embrace innovative techniques rather than remaining with conventional methods may also be a contributory factor (Gursory, E. et al., 2016). The primary objective of this research is to explore the potential integration of a clinical supervision model to improve the performance, quality of novice teacher and the role of the supervisors.

Significance of the Study

Sarfo & Cudjoe, (2016) emphasize, referring to (Glickman, Gordon and Gordon 2004), that supervision is fundamental and can influence the effectiveness of schools. Effective supervision typically encompasses activities that assist, guide, and inform teachers about what actions should be taken or have been completed, rather than merely identifying faults in their teaching practices. It is evident that especially in pre-service teacher training, where supervision is crucial; the supervisory approaches employed by some NCoE lecturers, mentors, and principals at internship schools require modernization to incorporate new supervisory trends. The reliance on traditional supervisory methods is prevalent, resulting in minimal improvement or motivation for teacher trainees regarding their professional growth. Consequently, this study aims to support NCoE lecturers, mentors, and principals at internship schools in refining their supervisory practices, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and ensuring a quality improvement in both areas.

Not only are there pre-service teacher trainee programs, but there are also initiatives for in-service teacher training, Higher National Diplomas, and Post Graduate Diplomas that require an

effective supervision model. This democratic method, which will incorporate several elements of clinical supervision practices, can also be applied to these programs. Overall, this research has the potential to improve the education system, as it benefits supervisors, supervisees, and students alike. Moreover, the outcomes of this study can aid in the development of teacher training curricula, leading to enhancements in teacher preparation. Another important aspect of this study is that there has been minimal research focused on this topic aimed at improving pre-teacher training within the Sri Lankan context. Additionally, the findings of this study could serve as a resource for other researchers conducting further studies. Supervision remains a subject of ongoing debate and exploration. Therefore, this type of research will play a crucial role in future investigations aimed at improving the quality of teaching and supervisory practices.

Research Background

Supervision plays a crucial role in education, significantly contributing to the improvement of educational quality in any nation. The introduction of National Colleges of Education (NCoEs) by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in the mid-1980s marked a pivotal change in Teacher Training in Sri Lanka. Before this, teachers were selected based on their basic educational credentials and subsequently enrolled in Teachers' Colleges, where they received two years of in-service training. Initially, they had to serve as untrained teachers in schools, lacking knowledge of proper teaching methods and a clear understanding of their expected roles until they underwent training (Nanayakkara & Neumann, 2015).

The quality of education has been adversely impacted, primarily because the supervisory practices employed in Sri Lanka for teacher training have not been effective (Wanasinghe & Nawastheen, 2020). To promote a quality teaching and learning experience, the concept of National Colleges of Education was established in 1985, as previously stated. For this program, Advanced Level qualified non-graduates are selected based on their Z-score. Initially, they undergo two years of institutional training, followed by a third year dedicated to internship training. Therefore, pre-service teacher training was introduced for the first time in Sri Lanka.

Currently, there are nineteen NCoEs functioning across various regions in the country to provide training for teachers in subjects such as English, Science, Mathematics, Information Technology, Physical Education, and the second languages of Sinhala and Tamil, among others. However, there seems to be insufficient direction regarding the supervision of these trainees during their internship training, apart from the guidelines issued by the National Institute of Education (NIE). Although there are established guidelines for internship supervision, the lack of consistency remains a significant concern (Nanayakkara & Neumann, 2015). Despite the NCoEs conducting awareness programs and workshops for mentors and principals in internship schools, it has been observed that mentors, school management, and some lecturers implement their own supervisory methods at the operational level. Many interns report feeling criticized and often embarrassed in front of their students. Factors such as inadequate discussion, negotiation, and the absence of a supportive, democratic approach from the supervisor have hindered many interns from cultivating a positive outlook on their future profession. A standardized evaluation sheet with specific criteria is provided to NCoE lecturers, mentors, and school principals for observation and supervision purposes. After supervision sessions, feedback is primarily given through group discussions and briefings, though at times, no feedback is provided. There is

minimal evidence of clinical supervision being utilized for these teacher trainees to help them address their challenges.

Besides, there is very little research on supervision in Sri Lankan context to explore the possibilities of applying a more effective supervision model to enhance the quality of supervisory practices and pre-service teacher training programmes.

Under these circumstances, it is felt as a timely need to explore this background and propose a better practical approach, from which the novice teachers can benefit, while supervisors develop their supervisory practices in a better way enhancing the quality of teacher training programmes in the country.

Research Limitations

There are nineteen NCoEs around the country including almost all provinces. This study will focus only on three NCoEs: two from Central, and one from the western province in the country. Although over ten courses are conducted, only three main courses of study (English, Primary and Social studies) have been included.

Literature Review

It is commonly observed, especially within the Sri Lankan context, that while lecturers from the National College of Education and mentors assigned at internship schools supervise pre-service teacher training programs at various stages, a comprehensive understanding of effective supervision is still lacking. This situation closely resembles the findings of Gursory, E. et al. (2016), who point out through their research that university supervisors tend to maintain a traditional role, adversely affecting the supervisees. They describe it as a 'mechanistically routinized series of actions.' They also indicate that supervisors should function as proactive agents in conflict resolution and problem-solving during the practicum. Effective supervision necessitates the creation of a mutual understanding among all parties involved in the practicum. Hence, a thorough comprehension of supervision is crucial for teacher trainees to provide better service and enhance quality. These conventional practices are prevalent not only in Sri Lanka but also in various regions globally. A research study conducted in Addis Ababa, focusing on government primary schools (Kemal Kayıkcı1 Ozan Yılmaz & Şahin, 2016), presents a similar perspective. The study's results indicate that supervisors are not adequately fulfilling their roles as clinical supervisors, and the class observation that is carried out is ineffective in meeting expectations. This research suggests that education authorities should take steps to train supervisors, equipping them with a solid understanding of the latest supervisory practices to improve the quality of teachers and education. This highlights the vital importance of the supervisory role in enhancing teacher performance and the overall quality of education.

Moreover, researchers have consistently pointed out that certain supervisory methods employed by supervisors can be discouraging. Many novice trainees often feel humiliated in front of students due to the rather authoritarian supervisory tactics used by their supervisors. (Kemal, K. et al (2017) indicate that traditional supervision presents various issues, as it typically serves as a coercive tool for employment, instilling fear in teachers and focusing on the areas of concern for supervisors rather than those pertinent to teachers. It is a widely held belief that effective teaching and instruction are closely linked to successful learning outcomes. In contrast, supervision is regarded as a broader leadership function aimed at enhancing teachers' performance and instructional practices (Sarfo & Cudjoe, 2016). Glickman, Gordon, and Gordon



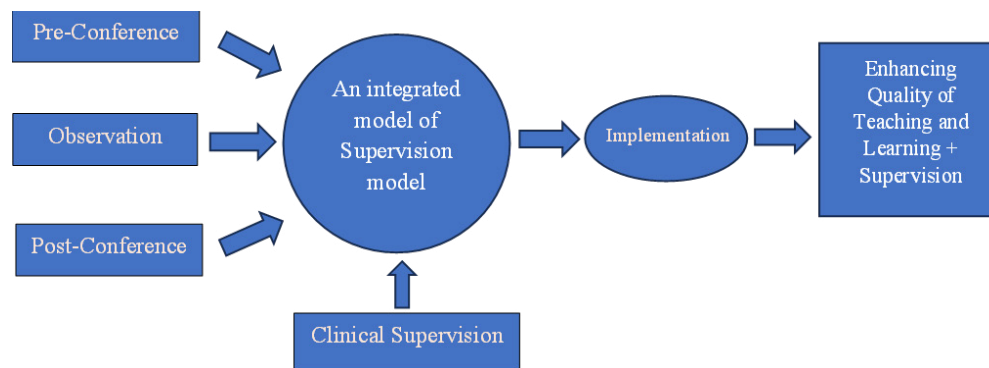


Figure 1: The summary of clinical supervision approach for teacher training.

(2004) have highlighted the significance of supervision, describing it as a fundamental element in promoting school effectiveness. They further explain that effective supervision is a process that supports, guides, and informs teachers about best practices, rather than merely criticizing the supervisee's teaching.

Conceptual Framework

Missing Text

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study was carried out through sequential explanatory mixed method. Both quantitative and qualitative research designs were implemented. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The study consisted of three phases. In the first phase, questionnaires were given and conducted investigating the teacher trainees' opinions towards supervision by NCoE lecturers, and the factors affecting the quality of their performances were analyzed. Lecturers' views also were taken into consideration through a questionnaire. Accordingly, the gaps in the supervisory practices were studied and an effective model for supervision was formulated. In the final phase, the proposed supervision model was used experimentally for an experimental group consisting of 5 teacher trainees and a control group consisting of 5 teacher trainees. The proposed model was tested with the experimental group, while the control group being treated in the normal setting during teaching practice. Data were collected and analyzed. The nature of the study required the use of a stratified sampling technique and purposive sampling techniques in selecting participants.

Setting of the study

The study was carried out taking three national colleges of education in Sri Lanka namely,

- Mahaweli National College of Education located in Central Province (50 teacher trainees)
- Sripada NCoE in Central Province (25 teacher trainees)
- Pasdunrata NCoE (60 trainees)

Population

The annual intake of teacher trainees to 19 NCoEs located island wide is about 4500. Almost all NCoEs conduct more than one course. For example, Mahaweli NCoE conducts five courses, some of the courses followed by them are for instance Science, Mathematics, English, IT, Social Science, Second Languages Sinhala, Tamil etc.

Sampling Frame

Inclusion criteria

English, Social Science and Primary teacher trainees who were continuing their internship during the third year of their training, and both male and female teachers of these categories were included in the sampling frame.

Exclusion criteria

Teacher trainees of Higher National Diploma courses, graduates, non-trained teachers were excluded from the sample.

Confidence level 95%
Margin of Error 5%
Population proportion 10%
Population size 4500
Sample size 135

Sampling Method

For this study, stratified sampling method was used to collect quantitative data from questionnaire survey.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Out of one hundred and thirty-five teacher trainees, when asked about the approaches used by lecturers 87.5% stated that they experienced rather traditional feedback from their supervisors. By looking at the lesson plan and with the evaluation sheet provided, marks were awarded by the lecturers. 77% mentioned that the supervisors were rather authoritative, and they lacked democratic approaches. 65% of respondents stated that fault finding was the main focus of their lecturers. Lack of uniformity and objectivity among supervisors were another two major areas to be seriously taken into consideration. All the teacher trainees strongly agreed that the process of supervision carried out by lecturers should be help-oriented and confidence building. 78% mentioned that feedback given in groupwise was not that much effective as they did not address the specific areas for improvement. 80% of the respondents expressed the need of a new format or model for supervision. All the teacher trainees emphasized the need of a stress-free environment for them to carry out their work.

The 50 supervisors responding to the questionnaire stated that their willingness to be updated with current trends in supervisory practices. 70% of them admitted that they were aware of clinical supervision and its positive impact on both

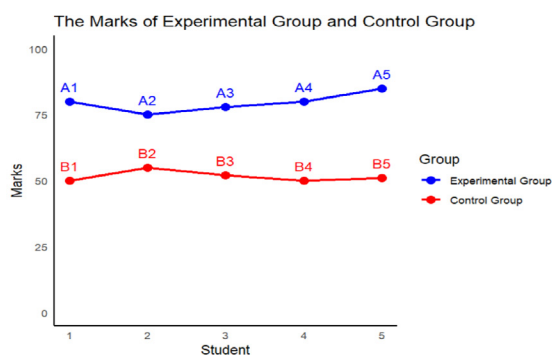


Figure 2: The Marks of Experimental Group and Control Group

supervisee and supervisor, yet they complained of the difficulty of observing and supervising 10-15 teacher trainees and lack of time for individual attention. Further, majority of them expressed their displeasure for not having training, or workshops to update and refresh their knowledge in relation to supervision. All the 50 supervisors mentioned the importance of including the basics of clinical supervision into the Teaching Practice component of their curriculum.

The Experiment

This research employed an explanatory sequential design, leading to the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Given that the research topic is 'The formulation of a practical instrument to enhance supervisory practices for teacher training in Sri Lanka', a new instrument was developed that integrated CS into the existing one. Two classes of students from the same grade level at a government school were selected for this purpose. Two groups of English teacher trainees were formed, each consisting of five trainees and designated as A and B. Group A, the experimental group, received input about CS, while Group B, the control group, was only instructed to teach in accordance with the training they had received from their supervisors, without any further explanation or briefing.

Both groups were tasked with creating lesson plans based on the current lesson plan model. The five trainees in the experimental group were supported and guided during the pre-conference, and their teaching was observed using the new instrument (refer to appendix i), while the five trainees from the control group proceeded with their teaching independently and were also observed. Their performances were assessed with a scoring system.

Interpretation

The *t*-value (-14.924)

This is quite a large value indicating that there is a substantial difference between the mean marks of the two groups. The negative value indicated that the mean marks of the experimental group is higher than that of the control group.

The *p*-value (3.54×10^{-6})

The *p*-value is much smaller than 0.05 (the recommended threshold for significance) indicating strong evidence against the null

hypothesis. Hence, we can conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean marks of the experimental and control groups.

95% Confidence Interval [-32.53152, -23.46848]

The range indicates that the true difference of mean marks between the two groups lies within this interval. This range does not include zero indicating there is a difference in the mean marks of the groups. Furthermore, it is evident that the experimental group's mean is higher than that of the control group since both values are negative.

Recommendations

It is crucial to place greater emphasis on the supervisory techniques currently utilized in teacher training, as they have a substantial impact on the quality of both teaching and learning experiences. Implementing clinical supervision for the practical teaching aspect is essential, given that traditional approaches fail to reach the expected standard of quality. There is a need to modernize pre-service teacher training by incorporating contemporary trends, innovative methods, and new strategies to align with national educational goals.

The research findings evidently indicate the positive effects of clinical supervision and how it can be integrated to improve teaching and learning outcomes. Moreover, it is essential to prepare and empower teachers through seminars, workshops, and conferences to keep pace with the requirements of the 21st century. An additional critical point is the need to increase the number of supervisors for teacher training, since having 10-15 trainees observed by a single supervisor is unlikely to produce satisfactory or expected results.

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