

Academic Supervision and Monitoring in Secondary Schools

Background of the study

Supervision can be formally defined as an aspect of management which focuses on overseeing, inspecting and controlling the performance or operation of a person, a group or an activity/project. According to Malik, Amin & Irfan (2011), 'Supervision' understood as covering all those services whose main function is (1) to inspect, control, evaluate; and/or (2) advise, assist and support those who are being supervised. Moreover, supervision is a key function to support and strengthen a monitoring system. In the education system, supervision plays a vital role to advise, assist and support school heads and teachers.

The supervisor is an adviser to teachers (Kolawole, 2012) and he provides constructive advice to teachers so that the quality of education in schools may improve (Bartky, 1973). A supervisor must be frank, honest and should be able to give proper advice to raise the standard of teaching and learning in schools (Kolawole, 2012). He must be strong willed, consistent and fair in dealing with other people. Adesina (1981) stated that supervisor should possess experience, have helpful attitude, genuinely enthusiastic about his job, and have zeal and vigor required dealing with problems occurring in schools. It therefore presupposes that a good supervisor must be sincere, firm, approachable, ready to help people, solve their problems and encourage others to work in harmony to achieve the goals and objectives of the school system. Moreover, the supervisor must learn how to guide and direct efforts of the supervisee (Kolawole, 2012). This involves learning about many factors that motivate people, and understanding the principles and methods of supervision that are known to be effective. Aiyepoku (1987) identified the functions of a supervisor as a professional guide, the link between the schools and the policies of the Ministry of Education, a professional who monitors the system in order to provide a feedback to policy makers who invariably plan for the school system.

On the other hand, monitoring can be defined as an internal management process of continuous control of inputs, processes and outputs in order to identify strengths and weaknesses, formulate practical proposals for action to be taken and take the necessary steps to reach the expected results (Niall & Hugh, 2009).

It is mentioned earlier that the role of supervision is to improve the quality of monitoring in education system. Monitoring is concerned with quality, and supervision ensures that quality. Unfortunately, there is no standard definition of quality. Quality is a multi-dimensional concept composed of three interrelated dimensions: the quality of the human and material resources available (inputs); the quality of the management and teaching-learning processes taking place (processes); and the quality of the results obtained (outputs) (Niall & Hugh, 2009).

Several studies have forcefully demonstrated that regardless of the actions being the classroom. Schools are the delivery points at which all the inputs of the system come together for interaction and determine the quality of the teaching-learning process. This is why in a growing number of countries quality-monitoring strategies are paying special attention to the functioning of schools. An analysis of different monitoring approaches according to their main

focus will help in clarifying this issue (Malik, Amin & Irfan, 2011). As is the case for supervision, countries have built over time more or less complex monitoring systems that differ according to their main focus or area of concentration and also according to the main locus or body in charge.

For this reason we need know what the main objectives of supervision and monitoring system. According to Malik, Amin & Irfan (2011)

1. Assess the progress of program/project with reference to their immediate and long-term objectives
2. Identify necessary actions in order to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of the program or project
3. Provide feedback information for adjustments in work plan and budgets
4. Provide information on future program needs

Finally supervision is the instructional leadership that relates perspectives to behavior, clarifies purposes, contributes to and supports organizational actions, coordinates interactions, provides for maintenance and improvement of the instructional programs and assesses goal achievements (Kerry & Burke, 1989). It is also the general leadership role and a coordinating role among all school activities concerned with learning. It is an important part of education. It is required to prevent misbehavior and protect students who are studying in school. The best approaches will often differ, depending on the school and the situation within the school (Ugboko & Adediwura, 2012).

The Government of Bangladesh has initiated the SESIP project which aims to ensure efficiency, quality, accountability and equity in Secondary Education Sector. One of the major specific objectives of this project is to assist the secondary schools in improving the planning, management and monitoring mechanisms utilizing the limited available resources with the focus for strengthening School Management and Supervision. Under this project two officials are responsible for academic monitoring and supervision of the Secondary Schools.

i. Assistant Supervisor, District Education Office:

The main responsibilities of the assistant supervisor under this project are:

- Visit the cluster wise secondary schools determined by District Education Office monthly basis for academic improvement and provide assistance to the schools and monitoring.
- Implement specific programmes taken by the Ministry of Education (PBM, SBA and CQ) in the Secondary Schools for their academic improvement.
- Sending monthly report for achieving overall quality of the educational institutions on the specific form to respective Deputy Directors' Office through intensive supervision.
- Organize threefold workshop for providing specific instructions of implementing PBSS, SBA and CQ methods with the Head Teachers and Assistant Teachers of secondary schools located within clusters.

- Organize threefold workshop with SMC, Head Teachers, Assistant Teachers and Guardians for inclusion, exclusion and implementation of prepared development plan.
- Submit a assessment report on the implementation strategy on PBM, SBA and CQ with recommendations to District Education Officer
- Submit annual development plan of the educational institutions by counter signing and a report on it to District Education Officer.

ii. Upazila Academic Supervisor:

The main responsibilities of the upazila academic supervisor regarding academic supervision under this project are:

- Visit the cluster wise secondary schools determined by District Education Office monthly basis for academic improvement and provide assistance to the schools and monitoring.
- Implement specific programmes taken by the Ministry of Education (PBM, SBA and CQ) in the Secondary Schools determined by the District Education Office for their academic improvement.
- Analysis the achievement against the determined aims for the identified educational institutes' academic improvement and assist the institutions for implementing their academic improvement plan through intensive visit.
- Organize threefold workshop with the Head Teachers and Assistant Teachers of secondary schools located within clusters for providing specific instructions of implementing PBSS, SBA and CQ methods.
- Submit annual reports prepared by all schools on academic improvement to District Education Officer by monitoring and counter signing.
- Organize threefold workshop with SMC, Head Teachers, Assistant Teachers and Guardians for inclusion, exclusion and implementation of prepared development plan.
- Submit the threefold report prepared by institutional Heads for achieving the specific target, planning and implementation strategy on PBM, SBA and CQ to District Education Officer by reviewing and counter signing.

Rationale of the study

Academic supervision is one of the core functions for improving academic practices at implementation level of any field. In particular, the academic activities of a school as well as other activities largely depend on the proper academic supervision by the experts. This study mainly confined on the academic supervision and monitoring practices, opportunities and challenges and its effectiveness at secondary school level.

The results of this study will explore the present practices of academic supervision and monitoring activities conducted by different personnel related to this field including the govt. officials and schools authorities. This will help us to conceptualize the present situation and the challenges of conducting academic supervision and monitoring activities. The school teachers

and officials will understand their activities, its nature and effectiveness in the respective levels. They could also use the results and then take necessary initiatives to strengthen the academic practices by the teachers and others at schools. These initiatives will enhance the school practices as well as ensure proper teaching-learning activities at schools. Therefore, these will eventually help to ensure the ultimate learning of the future generation.

The results will moreover help the education policy makers to understand the present practices of academic supervision and monitoring at secondary schools. They can use the results to take necessary actions for further actions to improve the academic supervision and monitoring practices for ensuring educational achievement. These initiatives will help to strengthen the supervision and monitoring practices. Through these processes learning of secondary students will be ensured.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to explore the present situation of academic supervision and monitoring practices at secondary schools in Bangladesh. More specifically, this study focuses on the strategies of academic supervision and monitoring is being done by different respective officials, opportunities and challenges of this activities. Furthermore, the extent of effectiveness of the present practices is also taken into consideration in this study.

Research Objectives

The main objectives of this study are to identify the present situation of academic supervision and monitoring system at secondary level in Bangladesh.

1. What is the way of academic supervision and monitoring system at secondary level?
2. What are the opportunities and challenges faced to ensure supervision and monitoring system at secondary level?
3. To what extent the academic supervision and monitoring system is effectively running at secondary schools?

Scope of work

The study covers the secondary schools and its teachers, students and related officials located in the different districts under the education boards. This study is confined only on the mainstream secondary schools located in the respective areas. Focus is given to only those aspects related to academic supervision, its nature, strengths and weaknesses academic supervision and monitoring, role of different stakeholders in this process and future path ways.

Methodology

Nature of the study

This study has been conducted following mixed method research approach based on qualitative with some quantitative evidences. It is an empirical study based on data collection from primary and secondary sources. A multiple instrumental approach has been adopted for this study. The primary data have been collected through document analyses checklist, semi-structured

interview and questionnaire. The study methodology has been consisted of the following activities:

In order to ensure the effectiveness and feasibility of the study, the data have been collected from randomly selected 56 secondary schools in Bangladesh. Moreover, school head teachers, assistant teachers, Upazila Secondary Education Officer (USEO) and District Education Officers have been selected for collecting both types of data. The data have been analyzed in both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Population of the study

The data have been collected from randomly selected 56 secondary schools in Bangladesh.

The populations of this study are:

- All the secondary schools
- All Head teachers of secondary schools
- All the assistant teachers of secondary schools
- All USEO
- All Upazila Academic Supervisor
- All District Education officer

Sample and Sampling

The study covers all the educational divisions considering the education board of Bangladesh. Thus, the sample categories are:

- A total number of 14 districts have been selected randomly from different educational divisions of Bangladesh. Among the 14 districts, 2 districts have been selected randomly from each division.
- A total of 14 Upazilas have been selected randomly as the local areas. Among those upazilas, 1 upazila have been selected from each district.
- A total of 56 secondary schools have been selected randomly, where 4 schools have been selected from each upazila. In selecting the schools, location of the schools namely urban and rural have been considered maintaining 2 schools from urban and other 2 from rural.
- A total of 56 Head teachers have been selected purposively from 56 schools to collect their opinion in this regard.
- A total of 112 assistant teachers considering two teachers from each of the 56 secondary schools have been selected randomly to explore the present situation of academic supervision and monitoring system of secondary schools of Bangladesh.
- A total of 14 USEOs have been selected randomly to collect their opinion on challenges and opportunity of academic supervision at secondary level.

Major findings

The major findings of this study have been identified based on the analysis and interpretation of the collected data from different sources. The major findings are:

- It is found that the average number of school is around 215 per district among the sample area. It is also seen that the numbers are oddly discriminated among the district having the maximum number 432 and the minimum number 114.
- The school observation mainly occurs according to cluster area while in some case according to upazilla.
- The academic supervision is mainly done by DEO, USEO and Upazilla Academic supervisor. Sometimes it is also done by the head teachers. Academic supervision and monitoring happens in every school and it happens in a monthly basis.
- It is also found that DEO observes Academic supervisor's (AS) work. They mainly observe whether AS are visiting the school in a regular basis or not. The number of visit is mainly around 11-20 per month. But from the Head teachers the number is 1-3 per month.
- The main issues of school visiting are teaching Learning process, regular attendance of the teachers, regular attendance of the students, Head teachers' activities, assembly and school documentation process.
- The areas which get importance in school observation time are academic work, administrative works, teacher and students' attendance, clean and clear management, teaching-learning environment, teaching process application of Govt. principals, head teachers' work, classroom teaching, SMCs' work, Co-curricular activities, lesson plan, ICT facilities, Library work, school timing and sports related activities.
- It is found that 'school management' gets full priority during the observation time by the observing authority. But they emphasize highly in it but some of them give emphasize to a great extend.
- The authorities give different suggestions during their supervision. The suggestions are given in a combination form of written and oral version by the supervisors after supervision.
- It is found that the suggestions are followed and preserved by the teachers in observation book because every school has a observation book.
- The written and oral suggestion helps enough to increase the quality of education, teaching and learning, decrease the dropout rate, and improve quality of school management, teachers and students.
- It is initiated that secondary schools mainly managed by the combined effort of all stake holders. But there are some other school management type such as SMC member centered and Head teacher authoritarian.

- It is revealed that school authority communicates with them about school management issues and the communication happens mainly when they face any kind of problem. But in some case it is just a regular process of communication.
- The highlighted topics of communications are school related problem, student related issues, about employment, teachers situation (USEO), about vigorous aspect of school and government program related issues.
- It is found that USEOs' help the school authority on different school management issues. The ways of help are to make them understand government ordinance, rules and principal and also help them to follow them properly. They also help them to find a solution of a problem, arrange meetings about different issues with SMC and PTA, in improving the quality of education and in different administrative problems.
- Class room observation found one of the most essential parts of school visiting by the respondents. While observing they mainly focus on teaching learning process, lesson plan, use of teaching aids and teachers' presentation style. Most of them current stuffs about academic supervision are quite ok. Some of them said that they think it is not enough.
- The head teachers also do the academic supervision. He gives suggestions in written and oral version. The assistant teachers also agreed with that and added they follow these suggestions.
- There are some problems faced in academic supervision. The main problem is the non cooperation of the teachers.
- These problems are mainly solved by the head teacher by arranging teachers' meeting if they are academic problem. In case of infrastructure related problem head teachers solve them with the help of local people and SMC.

Recommendations

The recommendations have been made based on the major findings of this study. The recommendations are:

- The monitoring and supervision authorities for secondary schools should be more active with maintaining the regularity. In this purpose they could prepare a realistic monitoring and supervision plan with the focus of quality aspects of secondary education. The ministry of education could take initiatives to activate the field officials in this regard.
- Training for the monitoring and supervision officials is required focusing on their specific responsibilities. The job responsibility of the respective personnel is needed to be modified concentrating only on the quality aspects of secondary education.
- The monitoring and supervision officials' motivation is needed to be enhanced through proper motivational programmes so that they will be increase their extent of monitoring and supervision in the secondary schools.
- Increase manpower for monitoring and supervision considering the number of schools and areas. Therefore, required number of monitoring and supervision could be feasible and eventually the objectives of these activities could be achieved.

- The respective personnel should provide written feedback along with oral feedback. The written feedback should be more focused on the reflection of quality practices in the secondary schools. The teachers' motivation is required to be included while giving feedback during monitoring and supervision which would ensure better reflection in practices of teachers.
- Govt. officials responsible for monitoring and supervision should keep an eye to ensure quality of teacher during visits. They could provide feedback for improving teacher's teaching quality so that quality learning would be ensured as a result.
- Teachers' accountability for teaching in classrooms could be considered as an important aspect of monitoring and supervision in the secondary schools. It would help the teachers to be concerned about their accountability for ensuring quality teaching-learning activities in classrooms.
- Cooperation of teachers is required while the monitoring and supervision activities are going on so that the visitors could understand the reality and the specific areas of improvement and then can provide realistic feedback to the teachers.
- Collaboration among the SMC, PTA, Teachers, Head Teachers and the Officials is needed to be ensured for quality monitoring and supervision. This would help for proper reflection of the feedback given by different personnel in school level practices.