

Supervision

Dr. S. B. M. Marume¹, Dr. Chikasha², E. Jaricha³,

¹BA, Hons BA, MA, MAdmin, MSoc Sc, PhD

²BEd, DPHE, MEd, DEd

³BA, MBA, DPhil (Candidate)
Zimbabwe Open University

ABSTRACT: To all those social scientists whose main focus of study is organisational theory and practice, the concept of supervision is seem to mean overseeing the work of subordinates by their superiors and involves various activities, namely, superintendence, direction, guidance, control, inspection, and coordination. All these aspects constitute the main focus of this article.

Keywords: supervision, overseeing, superior, subordinates, direction and control

I. INTRODUCTION

Supervision as an organisational concept is a compound concept consisting of two terms, namely, **upper** and **vision** [Latin: video, visi, visum = I see, seeing] **which means overseeing the work of various subordinates by their superiors.**

II. PURPOSE OF THE ARTICLE

The purpose of this article is to **analyze** the complex term of supervision and to identify its various components and activities.

III. SUPERVISION AS AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF ORGANIZATION

1.1 Meanings

Etymologically speaking, **supervision** is a compound of **two** terms **upper** and **vision** which means overseeing. Thus, **supervision** means **overseeing** the work of **subordinates** by their **superiors**.

Supervision involves various activities namely **superintendence, direction, control, guidance, inspection and coordination**. Educative and consultative aspects are also a part of it. Thus, a supervisor's role is similar to that of a leader's role.

The **principle of supervision** is inherent in the hierarchical structure or scalar chain) of the organization, under which each employee, at all levels is subject to the supervision of his immediate superiors. In this context, **J. M. Pfiffner** observes, from one point of view supervision runs up the hierarchy to its highest levels – bureau chiefs supervise division heads, who in turn supervise section heads, who supervise the rank and file. Thus, all persons in authority, who control the work of others, are supervisors irrespective of their position in the official hierarchy of the organisation.

1.2 Definitions

The following definitions of supervision are offered as follows;

Henry Reining :	supervision is the direction accompanied by authority, of the work of others
Terry and Franklin:	supervision means guiding and directing efforts of employees and other resources to accomplish stated work outputs
M. Williamson:	supervision is a process by which workers are helped by a designated staff member to learn according to their needs to make the best use of their knowledge and skills and to improve their abilities, so that they do their jobs more effectively and with increasing satisfaction to themselves and the agency

Yes, it appears sufficiently accommodate to define the concept of supervision as the process of guiding and directing of efforts by a designated senior person of employees and other resources to accomplish organizational stated work outputs [S.B.M. Marume: 1988].

1.3 Phases

According to **F. W. Marx**, the supervisor's job involves three phases or aspects.

- i. **Substantive or technical** – this relates to the work to be done, that is, a supervisor should know the techniques and the know – how of his work.
- ii. **Institutional or objective** – this relates to the policies and procedures (set down by the management), according to which the work must be done
- iii. **Personal or human** – this relates to the handling of workers, that is, motivating the work group to perform its tasks within the framework of policies and procedures

J. D. Millet says supervision has two primary purposes

- i. achieve coordination among the component parts of an agency
- ii. ensure that each unit of an agency accomplishes the task each has been assigned

1.4 Functions

According to **G. D. Halsey** supervision comprises six ingredients

- i. Selecting the right person for each job
- ii. Arousing in each person interest in his work and teaching him how to do it
- iii. Measuring and rating performance, to be sure that teaching has been fully effective
- iv. Administering correction where necessary and transferring employees to a more suitable work, or dismissing those for whom this proves ineffective
- v. Commending whenever praise is merited and rewarding for good work
- vi. Fitting each person harmoniously into the working group

H. Nissen lays down eleven duties of a supervisor's job

- i. Understanding the duties and responsibility of his own position
- ii. Planning the execution of the work
- iii. Dividing work among the subordinates and directing and assisting them in doing it
- iv. Improving work methods and procedures
- v. Improving his own knowledge as a technical expert and leader
- vi. Training the subordinates in their work
- vii. Evaluating the performance of the employees
- viii. Correcting mistakes and solving problems of the employees and developing discipline among them
- ix. Keeping subordinates informed about policies and procedures of the organisation
- x. Cooperating with colleagues and seeking their advice and assistance when needed
- xi. Dealing with the suggestions and complaints of the subordinates

1.5 Typologies of Supervision

1.5.1 Single and plural

When a member of an organisation is supervised by only one supervisor, it is known as single supervision. On the other hand, when a member of an organisation is supervised by various supervisors, it is known as plural supervision or multiple supervisions. The former is based on the principle of unity of command advocated by Henry Fayol, while the latter is based on the principle of functional foremanship advocated by **F. W. Taylor**.

1.5.2 Line and functional

The line supervision means the control exercised by the people in the line of command. It is direct and commanding in nature and involves authoritative direction. The functional supervision, on the other hand, means the control exercise by the subject-matter specialists like O & M commands. Thus, it is advisory in nature.

1.5.3 Substantive and technical

J.D. Millet classified supervision into substantive supervision and technical supervision. The former deals with the actual work done by an agency, while the latter concerns with the methods by which the work is done.

1.6 Techniques

J. D. Millet suggests six techniques of supervision

3.6.1 Prior approval of individual projects.

The subordinate units (field level agencies) should take prior approval of supervisor authority (headquarters) before taking any initiative outside the framework of policy. In India, the developmental projects not only require the previous permission of departmental heads but also that of Finance Ministry. This system of prior approval enables the superior authority to obtain details information about the intentions of the operating unit and to exercise detailed control over its operations.

3.6.2 Promulgation of service standards

The superior authority prescribes certain standards or targets for the subordinate agencies to accomplish. Such service standards are necessary in order to ensure that work is done promptly and properly by the operating agencies

3.6.3 Budgetary limitation upon the operations

The budgetary provisions (allotments) fix the magnitude of operations to be handled by the operating units in a specified time period. These units functions within such budgetary limits which are fixed by the higher authorities and thus, are not free to spend money as and when they desire. The work budget allotment is a method of delegating authority and encouraging local initiative while still retaining a central control over the magnitude of operations of the operating units.

3.6.4 Approval of subordinate personnel

The higher authority can exercise control over the subordinate units by providing previous approval of certain key appointments made by them. This system facilitates the superior authority to supervise the recruitment process at the operating level and to enforce its own standards of competence among the operating agencies.

3.6.5 Reporting system on work progress

The superior authority supervises those activities of operating units by asking them to submit periodic or special reports about their activities. He can evaluate the performance of operating units based on the information provided by such reports and thus control their operations

3.6.6 Inspection of results

Inspection is one of the oldest techniques of supervision and thus has been an integral part of public administration. It serves the following purposes.

- i. To acquire information
- ii. To know whether the existing rules, regulations and procedures are observed
- iii. To clarify management purpose and intention
- iv. To facilitate performance audit
- v. To acquaint the top management with the operating problems faced by subordinate levels of management
- vi. To instruct and guide the people working in the organisation
- vii. To build personal relationships of mutual acquaintance and confidence
- viii. To improve efficiency of the operating units

Thus, inspection facilitates the management to have firsthand knowledge of the operations of the subordinate units. However, it is usually used for the purpose of fact – finding rather than fault – finding.

Inspection work greatly differs from the investigation work. **Millet** says, the purpose of investigations is to inquire into some alleged or suspected incident of an abuse of management authority. It is concerned with the personal wrong – doing, often of a criminal nature. He adds, inspection is only a part of the process of supervision. The former has a negative role and is post facto review while the latter is more positive and is concerned with both the stages, that is, before an action and after it.

Thus, inspection and investigation are parts of the process of supervision which is certainly a more comprehensive term.

1.7 Qualities of a Supervisor

According to **J. M. Pfiffner**, a good supervisor should have the following **eight qualities**:

1. **Command of job content** – expert knowledge of the work to be supervised
2. **Personal qualifications** – integrity, cooperative spirit, evenness of temper, honesty, and ability to attract, motivate, enthuse and unite others
3. **Teaching ability** – ability to communicate his ideas to the workers and make them understand the management's point of view
4. **General outlook** – he should like his job and be absorbed in it and inspire and lead those under him
5. **Courage and fortitude** – ability to take decisions, assume responsibility and act decisively.
6. **Ethical and moral considerations** – freedom from vices having social disapprobation like gambling, brawls, financial embarrassments and so on.
7. **Administrative technology** – ability to manage, organise, coordinate and direct
8. **Curiosity and intellectual ability** – mental alertness and flexibility and receptivity to new ideas and practices.

G. D. Halsay has also identified the following six qualities of a good supervisor

1. **Thoroughness** – ability to collect all the information relevant to the issue
2. **Fairness** – a sense of justice, consideration and truthfulness towards workers
3. **Initiatives** – courage, self – confidence and decisiveness
4. **Tact** – ability to win the loyalty and support of others
5. **Enthusiasm** – interest, knowledge and achievement
6. **Emotional control** – ability to channel emotions in the right direction

Thus both J.D. Millet and G.D. Halsay are in agreement as to what the qualities of a supervisor in an organizational setting are and should be.

1.8 Likert's supervisory styles

Renis Likert's Michigan studies proved that the more general the degree of supervision exercised by a supervisor, the higher the level of production by a work group. Conversely, the closer the degree of supervision exercised by a supervisor, the lower the level of output by a work group. He also found that wherever supervisors are employee – centred (have a genuine concern for their people), the output of the employees is more than where the supervisors are production – centred (have a primary concern for the work to be performed within the prescribed standards).

Based on these findings, Likert classified supervisors into two types, namely, job – centred and employee-centred. The characteristics of these two types are summarized in Table 2.1

Table 1 Likert supervisory styles

Job – centred supervisors	Employee – centred supervisors
1. Exert heavy pressure to get work done	Exert little pressure on subordinates
2. Have little confidence in the subordinates	Earn and get the confidence and trust of their subordinates
3. Exercise close and detailed supervision	Exercise general supervision
4. Allow little freed to subordinates	Allow the subordinates to schedule their own pace of work
5. Do not permit the participation of subordinates in decision – making process	Permit maximum participation of subordinates in decision – making process.
6. Are punitive and critical when mistakes occur	Help subordinates when mistakes and problems occur
7. Devote more attention to work job	Devote more attention to responsibility job

A general observation is made that the more the responsibility the supervisor delegates to his subordinates, the greater the production and sense of ownership of production by employees. So democratic supervision is an important element in fostering loyalty, job security, good relationships and pleasant work environment [S.B.M. Marume, 1988]

IV. SUMMARY

Supervision, a critical element of organization theory and practice, which is also very closely linked to leadership, involves various activities, namely, superintendence, direction, control, guidance, inspection and coordination. In this context, a supervisor's role is very much similar to that of a leader's role.]

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Profiles of contributors and photographs

Samson Brown Muchineripi Marume: a former senior civil servant for over 37 years serving in various



capacities of seniority and thirteen years as deputy permanent secretary; **thirteen** years as a large commercial farmer; well travelled **domestically** within Zimbabwe; **regionally** [SADC countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Mauritius, Swaziland, South Africa, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and DRC]; and **Africa** [Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt, Nigeria, Ghana, Libya, and Uganda]; and **internationally** [Washington, New York and California in USA; Dublin and Cork in Ireland; London in England in United Kingdom; Netherlands, Frankfurt in Germany; Lisbon in Portugal; Spain (Nice), Paris in France, Geneva in Switzerland, Belgrade in former Yugoslavia-; Rome and Turin in Italy; Nicosia –

Cyprus; Athens – Greece; Beijing and Great Walls of China; Singapore; Hong Kong; Tokyo, Kyoto, Yokohama, and Osaka, in Japan]; **fifteen years** as management consultant and **part – time lecturer** for BA/BSc and MA/MBA degree levels with Christ College- affiliate of Great Zimbabwe University and National University of Science and Technology; six years as PhD/DPhil research thesis supervisor, internal and external examiner with Christ University, Bangalore, India [2010 – 2016], and Zimbabwe Open University; external examiner of management and administrative sciences at Great Zimbabwe University (2016 – 2019); currently senior lecturer and acting chairperson of Department of Public Administration in Faculty of Commerce and Law of Zimbabwe Open University; **a negotiator; a prolific writer** as he has published **five** books, prepared **thirty** modules in public administration and political science for undergraduate and postgraduate students, and over **seventy** referred articles in international journals [IOSR, IJSR, ISCA – IRJSS, IJESR, MJESR, IJESI, IJBMI, IJHSS and Quest Journals] on constitutional and administrative law, public administration, political science, philosophy, Africa in international politics, local government and administration, sociology and community development; vastly experienced public administrator; and an eminent scholar with specialist qualifications from University of South Africa, and from California University for Advanced Studies, State of California, United States of America: **BA with majors in public administration and political science and subsidiaries in sociology, constitutional law and English; postgraduate special Hons BA [Public Administration]; MA [Public Administration]; MAdmin magna cum laude in transport economics as major, and minors in public management and communications; MSoc Sc cum laude in international politics as a major and minors in comparative government and law, war and strategic studies, sociology, and social science research methodologies; and PhD summa cum laude in Public Administration.**



Dr. A. S. Chikasha: DEd (Unisa South Africa), MEd (UZ Zimbabwe), DPHE (Surrey England), BEd (Exeter England), STCE (Nairobi, Kenya); Director of the Higher Degrees Directorate of Zimbabwe Open University; researcher and author of several books and a number of articles in various international journals; a teacher of high schools for many years in both Zimbabwe and Kenya; and a distinguished scholar in the educational field.



Ernest Jaricha: currently a promising DPhil (candidate) with Zimbabwe Open University; holds Master of Business Administration [ZOU]; Bachelor of English and Communication Studies from University of Zimbabwe; higher diploma in human resource management from the institute of personnel management of Zimbabwe [IPMZ], diploma in adult education from University of Zimbabwe; certificate in personnel management; many years as civil servant as provincial officer (personnel) in Ministry of Local Government; personnel officer with Save Children (UK); joined Zimbabwe Open University as personnel officer, rising to position of manager and to director of human resources; and is developing to become a writer of a number of refereed articles in international journals in his own right.