

Inspectors' Opinions on the Pedagogical Supervision of Physical Education Students during Practicums

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Abstract

The study focused on the views of physical education educational inspectors in supervising physical education students during internships. A total of 33 educational inspectors from the city of Brazzaville working in general education colleges participated in the study. The survey was based on a questionnaire that included open-ended and closed-ended questions, focusing on: 1) their reactions to the supervision process; 2) their motivations for serving as educational inspectors; 3) their supervisory skills; supervisory training; 4) the factors favouring or limiting pedagogical supervision. The results revealed that educational inspectors represent different professional generations and are differently trained to supervise future teachers. The study made it possible to understand the multiple facets of supervision by identifying four frameworks through which supervisory managers interpreted their tasks during internships. Educational inspectors have both criticized teacher training programs and shown their commitment to facilitating the professional growth of future teachers.

Keywords: Pedagogical supervision, Teacher training, Physical education, Analysis of the framework, Practical internship

1. Introduction

The challenges we have faced on a daily basis in the teaching of physical education (PE) are increasingly relevant to all actors involved. Given the inclusion of this study in an educational context, supervision appears to be a process of teaching and learning, in relation to the social representations of educational inspectors in secondary schools, on the concept of pedagogical supervision. Pedagogical supervision is a concept related to the orientation of pedagogical practice by a person who, in principle, is more experienced and informed (Taptue, 2023), strongly influenced by the posture and vision of the pedagogical inspector, trying to see what happened before the supervision process, with an intelligent, responsible, empathetic, peaceful and engaging attitude. In other words, the educational inspector enters into the process to understand it from the outside. To do this, the pedagogical inspector analyses it from his point of view and sees it beyond, on the basis of strategic thinking, in order to improve the learning and teaching process, and to contribute to a better relationship between teacher and learners (Mintzberg, 1998; Desbiens et al., 2009).

In addition, previous research has shown that the internship is an important element of teacher education, crucial for the evolution of the professional identity of teachers in training and their engagement in the teaching profession (La Paro et al., 2018; Mena et al., 2017). Teachers in training appreciate the opportunities to practice their skills in real-life situations and under the supervision of more experienced teachers (Clarke et al., 2014; Vartuli et al., 2016). The expectations of the managers of educational inspectors are twofold: to serve as competent advisers in their classes and to facilitate the professional development of student teachers. The tasks of instructional inspectors have proven to be confusing; at times, instructional inspectors tend to underestimate their role in teacher education and prioritize student learning (Clarke et al., 2014; Trout, 2012; White & Forgasz, 2017). Educational inspectors would feel isolated from teacher training programs and consider their actions as educational inspectors to be self-evident (Kupila et al., 2017). Some studies have

problematized the knowledge base on which educational inspectors supervise (Kupita et al., 2017; White & Forgas, 2017). Although the internship experiences of student teachers have been widely explored, the views of educational inspectors have been less studied (Calamlam & Mokshein, 2019; Collins & Ting, 2017; Matengu et al., 2020). Andreassen et al. (2019) highlights this lack of empirical knowledge on the views of educational inspectors, as well as the insufficient theoretical development of their functions as teacher trainers. There is a tendency to approach supervision either as a matter of individual experiences of pedagogical inspectors or in terms of the relationship between pedagogical inspectors and trainee teachers, while less attention is paid to variations in teacher education curricula and societal contexts (La Paro et al., 2018; Quinones et al., 2020). Therefore, studies on the development of holistic theoretical understandings of how internships and supervision are shaped by complex interconnections between individuals and teacher education systems, are needed (Andreassen et al., 2019; Flores, 2016).

As a teacher-researcher in physical education at the Higher Institute of Physical and Sports Education, the only higher education institution authorized to train teachers and educational inspectors in Congo, we realized that we can consider different representations of the concept of pedagogical supervision in Physical Education by teachers, linked to different forms of development of teaching practices. This led us to consider the importance of understanding the relationship between these same representations and the practices associated with them.

Given that the future pedagogical inspectors in pedagogical supervision spend six months of internship in the colleges of Brazzaville, and that during this period they are followed by the pedagogical advisors and inspectors during the Physical Education classes, we considered it necessary to focus on the way in which the latter represent pedagogical supervision in Physical Education. Our study is a contribution to this theme by addressing the opinions of pedagogical inspectors in physical education on the supervision of students during internships within the framework of a systemic approach. To study this problem, we started from the following research question: How do physical education educational inspectors perceive supervision during internships in the context of the training of future teachers and trainee teachers in Physical Education in Congo-Brazzaville?

The study is theoretically based on a systems approach in which supervision during internships is considered part of a complex learning system in teacher education (Collins & Ting, 2017; Zeichner et al., 2015). The relationships between teachers in training (students) and educational inspectors are at the heart of the systemic approach (La Paro et al., 2018). Trout (2012), among others, calls for application and internship, *i.e.*, the establishment and maintenance of relationships of trust and benevolence with students. While the relationships between students and educational inspectors are an essential part of a successful internship, a wide range of other interconnected elements, such as the teacher training curriculum, the internship setting, the academic community, and the broader social and cultural context, appear to be important (Collins & Ting, 2017).

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Framework and Study Period

This study was conducted from February 3 to April 15, 2024, in Brazzaville, capital of the Republic of Congo, a city with the largest number of public general education colleges and physical education sector inspections in Congo.

2.2 Population and Sample

The census of educational inspectors working in the 9 sectoral inspectorates of the said city, based on data from the Ministry of Sports and Physical Education, revealed 146 educational inspectors. However, only 33 of them were selected, distributed as follows: 17 women and 16 men. The educational inspectors were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

(1) Inclusion Criteria:

Be in good physical condition;

Be a pedagogical inspector of Physical Education in charge of a public secondary school;

Be regular within the establishment;

Consent to participate in the study.

(2) Exclusion Criteria

Be an educational inspector at the primary school.

2.3 Experimental Procedure

Two tools were used for data collection: the questionnaire and the literature review.

The questionnaire was based on a quantitative approach. The choice of the questionnaire can be explained by the fact that, according to Abric (1997), it does not require any limitation on the respondent's expression vis-à-vis the strict questions proposed to him, in particular by recourse to evocation items or questions. Indeed, the questionnaire, through its standardization, reduces both the subjective risks of collection (standardized behavior of the interviewer) and the individual variations in the expression of the subjects (standardization of the respondents' expression: same questions for all subjects, same conditions of delivery, no intervention by the person in charge of the survey). It was therefore chosen for its ease of use and standardised nature. The questionnaire, which consisted of 30 questions (12 open and 18 closed), aimed to collect ideas, thoughts, symbols, feelings or emotions from the educational inspectors surveyed. It was structured as follows: the first part, composed of 5 items, concerned the identity of the subjects (gender, seniority, qualification and level of intervention, professional experience); the second part, which included 6 questions, focused on the reactions of the educational inspectors surveyed to the supervision process; the third part (5 questions) related to their motivation to serve as educational inspectors; the fourth part (6 questions) focused on their supervisory skills; the fifth part (5 questions) concerned supervision training; and finally the sixth part (3 questions) was based on the identification of

factors favouring or limiting supervision. A pre-survey was carried out to test the questionnaire in order to verify its fidelity, its operationality and therefore to validate the content in terms of comprehension, degree of acceptability and ease of interpretation of the questionnaires by the respondents. To do this, this first questionnaire was submitted to 7 physical education educational inspectors who did not participate in the study. The consistency of the questionnaire was checked using Cronbach's α index, which was calculated at 0.87.

The purpose of the documentary analysis was to identify the documents likely to shed light on the processes and methods of supervision of the teaching of Physical Education in secondary schools. Indeed, for Moliner et al. (2002), documentary analysis allows researchers to observe "argumentative decentralization", a phenomenon that appears in the phase of emergence of representations and which corresponds to the fact of "choosing a pre-existing reasoning framework that serves as a context for the new object of representations".

2.4 Variables

The parameters associated with the different representations of the educational inspectors surveyed constituted the dependent variables.

2.5 Statistical Analysis

Quantitative analysis of closed-ended questions was conducted using SPSS software. Beforehand, indices of descriptive statistics were used, mainly frequencies to identify the characteristics and their previous supervisory experiences. Finally, we analyzed the links between a few variables by cross-tabulation. The comparison of two percentages p_1 and p_2 was carried out using a statistical test defined as follows (Sokal & Rohlf, 1997):

$$t = |\sin^{-1}\sqrt{p_1} - \sin^{-1}\sqrt{p_2}|/D \quad (1)$$

where, $D = [820.8(n_1 + n_2)/n_1 \times n_2]$, n_1 and n_2 are numbers corresponding to the percentages p_1 and p_2 .

For more than two percentages, the S-test of Sokal and Rohlf (1997) was used. The threshold of statistical significance has been set at 5%.

3. Results

3.1 Socio-professional Characteristics of the Respondents

Of the 33 participants in the study, seventeen (17) were male (51.5%) and sixteen (16) were female (48.5%). In terms of age, the average age of respondents was 42.1 ± 5.7 years, with extremes of 26 (younger) and 58 (older). Respondents in the 30-49 age group were the most represented, with a total of 23 or 69.7% ($p < 0.05$).

The inspectors surveyed, who held a diploma of Assistant Professor of Physical Education, constituted more than half of the study sample (54.5%), followed by those with a bachelor's degree in Supervision (36.4%). Among the 33 respondents, those whose first training in

Physical Education was related to assistant physical education teachers ranked first (51.5%) followed by training for certified physical education teachers (48.5%).

3.2 Professional Development Framework

The analysis of the respondents' expression in pedagogical supervision according to the number of years of practice shows that the study participants with less than 5 years of age were more numerous (48.5%) followed by those with 6 to 10 years of experience (30.3%).

The respondents' main memories of pedagogical supervision as physical education teachers are recorded in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents' supervisory memories

Memories	Number of citations (n)	Percentages (%)
Improvement	14	42.4
Help, Support and Support	9	27.3
Knowledge exchange	4	12.1
Motivation	2	6.1
Learning Moment	4	12.1

3.3 Relational and Emotional Framework

The distribution of respondents according to the type of relationship maintained with students during internships (Table 2) shows that the help provided to the latter was mentioned more often (42.4% of the citations), followed by collaboration and exchange (21.2% of each).

Table 2. Type of relationships maintained by respondents with students during internships

Relationship	Number of citations (n)	Percentages (%)
Help	14	42.4
Work	3	9.1
Collaboration	7	21.2
Tutor and intern	2	6.1
Exchange	7	21.2

The type of authority exercised over students during internships is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Authority exercised by respondents over students during internships

Wording	Number of citations (n)	Percentages (%)
Democracy	14	42.4
Non-gendarme	5	15.1
Exchange	7	21.2
Guide	5	15.1
Pacific	2	6.2

There was more of a non-authoritarian democracy-like climate between respondents and students, with a total of 14 out of 33 citations (or 42.4%).

During these internships, 30.3% of the respondents (n = 10) mentioned the existence of particular emotions unlike the others (n = 23; 69.7%; $p < 0.05$).

3.4 Organizational Framework

With regard to the way in which the educational inspectors surveyed manage emotions, the higher emotion was mentioned more often (36.4% of the citations) (Table 4).

Table 4. How educational inspectors manage emotions

Wording	Number of citations (n)	Percentages (%)
Patient and listening	5	15.1
Agreement	6	18.2
Moderation	4	12.1
Superior emotion	12	36.4
Tactics	6	18.2

In addition, 72.7% of respondents (n = 24; $p < 0.01$) reported presenting routines to students during internships (Table 5).

Table 5. Presentation of routines to the student during internships

Wording	Number of citations (n)	Percentages (%)
Annual programming by the department	10	30.3
Periodicity	15	45.4
Work schedule	8	24.3

3.6 Student Training Framework

According to 84.8% of the respondents ($p < 0.01$), there was a gap between theory and practice during internships. Regarding whether or not students agree with opportunities during internships, nearly 9 out of ten respondents said that they gave opportunities to interns to express themselves better. As for the existence or not of discussions between educational inspectors and students during internships, more than half of the respondents (51.5%) acknowledged their existence.

Of the 17 respondents who acknowledged the existence of discussions between educational inspectors and trainees, these concerned the pedagogical situation for 6 educational inspectors (35.2% of cases) and the exchange relationship for 5 inspectors (29.6%) (Table 6).

Table 6. Nature of discussions between educational inspectors and trainees

Wording	Number of citations (n)	Percentages (%)
Pedagogical situation	6	35.2
Feedback	3	17.6
Exchange relationship	5	29.6
Didactic transposition	3	17.6

In addition, 66.6% of the respondents ($n = 22$; $p < 0.05$) mentioned the existence of objectives set by educational inspectors during internships. In addition, the criteria for evaluating students during internships were diverse, as mentioned by the respondents (Table 7). In descending order of frequency of citation, it was a question of the concepts taught (45.4%), the performance (33.3%) and the difficulties encountered (21.3%).

Table 7. Distribution of respondents by nature of trainee evaluation criteria

Wording	Number of citations (n)	Percentages (%)
Concepts taught	15	45.4
Performance	11	33.3
Difficulties encountered	7	21.3

Finally, all the respondents stated that the educational inspectors supported the trainees in their professional growth with a view to the exercise of their future profession.

4. Discussion

This exploratory study was based on a global vision of the pedagogical supervision system in physical education in order to explore the points of view of educational inspectors on supervision in internships. The study of the interactions and interdependencies between each outcome has been relegated to the second. Rather than focusing on individual educational inspectors or their supervisory practices, educational inspectors' perspectives on supervision were explored within the context of a complex physical education learning system. The results of this study offer a first opening on the points of view of educational inspectors on supervision in Physical Education. The study paints a complex picture of how the qualifications and professional background of educational inspectors, relations with students, working conditions in internship contexts and collaboration with Physical Education programmes are closely linked to teachers' views on supervision. The study contributes to research on teacher education not only by generating empirical knowledge about Congolese educational inspectors' views on supervision, but also by drawing attention to issues that may have relevance beyond the Congolese context of physical education education.

First, the study questions how belonging to different professional generations influences the views of educational inspectors on supervision. Moving from learning to an integrated model of PE teaching poses challenges for educational inspectors to extend their role beyond intuitive role modeling to conscious dialogue, co-examination, and co-reflection with their students (Foong et al., 2018; Quinones et al., 2020). The extensive tasks require that educational inspectors be able to discuss the content of the physical education curriculum and current trends in physical education research and practice with their students. This study shows that teachers from various backgrounds work as educational inspectors in Physical Education in Congo: some educational inspectors followed a two-year college-level training course that ended as a curriculum in the 1980s, while others obtained a university degree or a master's degree in the 2000s. Educational inspectors therefore represent different professional generations.

As previous research shows, the different professional generations reflect the educational orientations and backgrounds of their time, with different professional reflections and attitudes towards the work of Physical Education (Kupila et al., 2017). This study addresses

the differences between the professional generations of educational inspectors as an important, although largely ignored, topic in the teaching of Physical Education.

In-service training is a critical way to maintain teachers' skills in a rapidly changing world. However, the study showed that there are differences between educational inspectors in terms of the level of in-service training they have received in supervision. Therefore, the pedagogical inspectors' own supervisory experiences have proven to be essential for their understanding and implementation of their supervisory tasks. The results showed that teachers had both positive and negative experiences being supervised as students or as educational inspectors. This variation is significant for the skills acquired by teachers and the way they perceive their supervisory role. Thus, our results encourage educational inspectors to reflect on their previous supervisory experiences in the early phases of their supervisory careers. In addition, the study suggests that educational inspectors representing different professional generations may need different support from the physical education curricula with regard to their supervisory tasks.

Second, the results of this study address the significance of supervisory training. Supervisory training appears to contribute to the professional development, networking and confidence of educational inspectors. The study thus confirms the results of previous research that argue for the importance of high-quality supervisory training for the development of educational inspectors as educational inspectors and the quality of supervision (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Balduzzi & Lazzarri, 2015; Ingleby, 2014; Kupila et al., 2017). Given that trained and qualified pedagogical inspectors play an important role in promoting the professional growth of future physical education teachers, we suggest that supervisory training should include the potential to increase the quality of physical education curricula (Uusimäki, 2013).

Third, the study provides an overview of the various meanings that educational inspectors explicitly or implicitly attach to supervision. Previous research has addressed the complexity and lack of clarity of the supervisory roles of educational inspectors (Ambrosetti, 2014; Calamlam & Mokshein, 2019). The present study identified six frameworks through which the participating educational inspectors interpreted supervision; The study thus clarifies the multi-layered meanings of supervision. We suggest that the six frameworks identified can be used to compose a framework that promotes an understanding of the multiple facets of supervision. The framework can be used in future research, as well as when thinking about supervision in physical education curricula and in supervisory training. The framework, for example, challenges the exploration of how different frameworks and associated meanings appear in different supervisory situations. Are there dominant, unknown or undervalued frameworks when educational inspectors interpret supervisory situations? What does it mean if the framework of teacher education remains implicit in teachers' interpretations? Recognizing the different frameworks and meanings of supervision can help educational inspectors and physical education curricula discuss the prerequisites and challenges of supervision. As Ambrosetti (2014) points out, a growing awareness of the complexities of supervision can encourage educational inspectors to modify and develop their practices. In addition, the growing awareness of the multi-layered meanings of supervision can help physical education programmes to support educational inspectors in their supervisory tasks.

Fourth, the study aims to further develop collaboration between the curricula of Physical Education and the field of Physical Education. Although a growing number of studies call for moving beyond the learning model towards a stronger partnership between universities and internship settings, the educational inspectors participating in this study considered themselves distant from universities (Collins & Ting, 2017). The separation of the university appeared as a criticism of the ECTE programmes and the assignments entrusted to students. Voices have been raised to highlight the excessive importance given to theoretical courses within the teaching of Physical Education, indicating the dichotomy between theory and practice in the views of educational inspectors (Collins & Ting, 2017; Flores, 2016; Zeichner et al., 2015). There were also teachers who were not aware of the objectives of the internship and of their own tasks as educational inspectors. The basics of supervision appeared intuitive and without problems for the educational inspectors. Although universities had developed practices to advance integrated teacher training models, educational inspectors did not identify themselves as insiders in physical education curricula. These notions pose a challenge for physical education education to reconsider how to strengthen the integration of physical education curricula and practicum settings and to further develop partnerships between universities and the field of physical education.

5. Conclusion

The study explored the views of physical education educational inspectors on the supervision of future middle school teachers' internships in the Congolese context. The results revealed that supervision is a complex phenomenon linked to various problems in teachers' lives, in practicum contexts, in curricula and in the Congolese education system. In addition, the results addressed various issues that challenge supervision, such as different student attitudes, multiple tasks and responsibilities of teachers, varying situations in internship contexts, and uncertainty about the content and objectives of internships.

Due to the relatively small number of participants, the results cannot be directly generalized beyond the research context. Nevertheless, the study raises questions that deserve to be addressed in any physical education curriculum: what kinds of basic assumptions about the theory-practice nexus, practicum, and supervision of physical education programs are based on? How are these assumptions realized in the implementation of Physical Education? What is expected of educational inspectors in the supervision of internships? How are they supported in the execution of their supervisory tasks? In the Congolese context, the results achieved challenge teacher trainers and physical education educational inspectors during internships to strive for a more appropriate and integrated supervisory model. Both parties would then benefit from a model in which the training of new generations of physical education teachers would be considered as a joint task of professionals working in universities and pedagogical inspectors during internships.

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Dr. TJJ, FBG and Dr. MHC were responsible for study design and revising. Dr. TJJ and FBG was responsible for data collection. MD and EA drafted the manuscript and Prof. MP and Dr. TJJ revised it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript. In this paragraph, also explain any special agreements concerning authorship, such as if authors contributed equally to the study.

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