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Teachers' Perceptions based on Tenure Status and Gender about Principals' Supervision

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.



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This descriptive study assessed teachers' attitudes about their formative supervision and the observational ability of principals through the constructs of teacher tenure status and gender. In sum, 255 teachers responded to an online survey indicating teachers' desired feedback focused on classroom climate, student engagement, and instructional strategies. Results indicated no discernible patterns in frequency and length to principals' formal and informal classroom observations based on teachers' tenure status or gender. However, non-tenured teachers were more willing to be observed and more positive about principals' feedback than tenured teachers. Non-tenured teachers were also significantly more positive about principals' feedback about student engagement which led to these teachers feeling encouraged about principals' observations. Female teachers were also more positive about principals' observations and feedback than male teachers; however, there were no significant differences between male and female teachers on the constructs measured.

Introduction

Effective teaching is critical to student achievement and research has concluded the quality of teaching is the most significant variable related to student achievement (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Rutledge, Harris, & Ingle, 2010; Stronge, 2003; Stronge & Hindman, 2006; Tuytens & Devos, 2011). As a result, there is national and international interest in identifying school principals' roles in impacting teachers' instructional effectiveness (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; May & Supovitz, 2011; Murphy, Hallinger, & Heck, 2013; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). The primary way in which principals directly impact teaching is through instructional leadership (Green, 2010; Hinchey, 2010; Robinson, 2010) which encompasses roles including recruiting and hiring effective teachers, providing resources to teachers, and formally and informally observing (Mitchell & Castle, 2005; Nettles & Herrington, 2007; Stronge & Hindman, 2006; Zepeda, 2013). Routine observation, called formative supervision, creates a picture of teacher performance, signals teaching is valued by principals, and ensures teachers receive feedback to improve their instruction (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007; Robinson et al., 2008). This feedback generated by formative supervision meets the inherent needs of teachers and promotes their innate need to reflect and collaborate with colleagues (Henson, 2010; Zepeda, 2013).

However, researchers have illuminated problems with school district teacher supervision procedures, with common problems being lack of differentiation based on the developmental level of teachers and limited time for principals to adequately provide supervision to all teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Hill & Grossman, 2013). For example, in their study of 12 school districts, Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, and Keeling (2009) found novice teachers' supervision was the same as experienced teachers' supervision, despite the fact both groups of teachers have vastly different needs. Additionally, Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2009) reported principals engaged least in day-to-day instruction tasks (i.e. conducting classroom visits, informally coaching teachers) with management duties consuming much of their time. As a result, the researchers in this study sought to understand similar supervision issues, and the purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions about principals' supervision through the frameworks of time and differentiation.

Conceptual Framework

The underpinning theories explored in this inquiry are supported within the literature surrounding two assumptions. First, the researchers assume principals' formative supervision improves teachers' instruction, and second, effective principals differentiate supervision for teachers based on various personal variables. The first assumption guiding this study is that teacher supervision is applied by principals to develop the skill set of teachers and typically follows three separate processes: (a) observation, (b) analysis, and (c) action planning for future growth (McCarthy & Quinn, 2010). Through these processes, it is inferred principals are the lynchpin to effective supervisory efforts as they monitor instruction, build trust with those they supervise, and provide instructional focus for schools (Leithwood & Day, 2007; Paredes Scribner, Crow, Lopez, & Murtadha, 2011). The primary method by which principals engage in instructional improvement is through classroom observations (Hill & Grossman, 2013) and these observations have "the potential to take on an instructional role if there is some sort of feedback

or follow-up discussion between principals and teachers about what happened in the classroom” (Ing, 2009, pp. 341-342).

The second assumption guiding this study is that effective principals differentiate supervision for teachers based on a host of variables. Successful principals understand a one-size-fits-all approach to supervision does not consider individual learning styles and “teachers are unique in terms of their pedagogy, experience, and content knowledge” (Haag, Kissel, Shoniker, & Stover, 2011, p. 499). To frame this study, teacher variables identified include tenure status and gender as the researchers assume effective principals might consider these variables when applying supervisory tasks. Both tenure status and gender might influence how teachers approach the context of their classrooms and react to feedback disseminated by principals after classroom observations (Guramatunhu-Mudiwa & Bolt, 2012; Walker & Slear, 2011).

Supervision

Formative supervision requires principals collect data on teacher effectiveness throughout the school year while teachers are performing their duties (Matthews & Crow, 2010) and hinges on the notion principals develop “a trusting relationship with [teachers] and provide intellectual service designed to improve [teachers’] practice and student learning” (Nolan & Hoover, 2008, p. 4). The primary goal for providing formative supervision is to assess how teachers are growing instructionally as opposed to assigning merit to their performance. When performed consistently, formative supervision reduces teachers’ tension about performance, encourages teachers to de-isolate and work with peers, and provides a clear focus on how teachers can improve their practice (Namaghi, 2010).

For the purpose of this study, the authors use Zepeda’s (2013) description of formative supervision and its two general methods: formal and informal observations. Formal observations occur when teachers have prior knowledge principals will observe their lesson, and formal observations might last 30 minutes to one hour, depending on whether the observation takes place in elementary or secondary schools (Zepeda, 2013). Formal observations usually follow the clinical supervision model, which is defined as a model or approach to supervision, one that is interactive rather than directive between principals and teachers (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2009). Clinical supervision contains three primary components: (a) a pre-observation conference in which principals and teachers meet to discuss the format and outcomes of the upcoming formal observation; (b) the formal classroom observation by principals in which they collect data on a variety of classroom variables; and (c) the post-observation conference in which principals provide feedback to teachers based on data collected during the observation, discuss plans for professional growth, and set the focus for the next formal observation (Kalule & Bouchamma, 2014).

Informal observations are similar to formal observations in that principals provide feedback to teachers after lessons (Ing, 2009). However, informal observations typically are shorter than formal observations, usually 10 to 30 minutes, and are not precluded with a pre-observation conference so teachers do not have prior knowledge they will be observed (Zepeda, 2013). An informal observation strategy recommended for principals, called *classroom walkthroughs*, allows principals to collect considerable data about instruction in a short period of time through a wide lens, meaning principals collect information on many classroom indicators (Nolan & Hoover, 2008; Zepeda, 2013). For example, Downey, Steffy, Poston, and English

(2010) and the Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington (Fink & Markholt, 2011) require principals to collect data about similar classroom variables which include student engagement, curriculum and pedagogy, classroom environment and climate, and purpose of instruction.

After formal or informal observations, it is important for principals to provide constructive feedback to teachers if principals expect instructional growth. “The assumption that feedback is a necessary component of instructional improvement draws from research on formative assessment” (Ing, 2009, p. 342). Specifically, teachers require ongoing feedback that helps identify areas for future growth (Ovando, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008; Stronge & Hindman, 2003), affirms their efforts (Roberson & Roberson, 2008), and identifies areas in which they can improve (Ovando, 2005; Tuytens & Devos, 2011). Zepeda (2013) characterized formative feedback as a conversation between principals and teachers that identifies strengths and weaknesses of the lesson, facilitates self-reflection, and promotes a professional growth plan to remediate areas that need improvement. Nolan and Hoover (2008) believed effective feedback is generated based on observed data, encourages teachers to reflect about their practice and brainstorm alternative instructional strategies, and emphasizes teacher strengths to reinforce teaching behaviors that positively impact student learning. Feedback that causes teachers to reflect is critical, and Nolan and Hoover categorized teacher self-reflection, instigated by feedback, into four types: (a) analysis of one’s own actions, (b) analysis of one’s own development as a teacher, (c) analysis of one’s own beliefs about instructional practices, and (d) analysis of oneself and his/her place in the school community.

Supervision Differences in Tenure Status and Gender

This study includes two unique supervisory issues principals face in schools, namely the supervision of non-tenured versus tenured teachers and the supervision of male and female teachers (Guramatunhu-Mudiwa & Bolt, 2012; Nolan & Hoover, 2008; Roberson & Roberson, 2008; Scherff, 2008; Shakeshaft, 2006). Principals benefit from adopting a developmental supervisory stance when working with non-tenured teachers and tenured teachers (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordan, 2005; Zepeda, 2013). Non-tenured teachers present a set of unique needs for principals focused on providing effective supervision (Fry, 2009; Le Maistre & Pare, 2010; Scherer, 2012). As a result, researchers have argued non-tenured teachers' supervision should be different than tenured teachers (Elliott, Isaacs, & Chugani, 2010; Glickman et al., 2009). In this style, principals recognize novice teachers as individuals with unique needs and tailor their formative supervision to maximize novice teachers' potential (Glickman et al., 2005). Additionally, tenured teachers require specialized supervisory support from principals, as many tenured teachers have advanced skill sets. Coggins and Diffenbaugh (2013) argued high-performing tenured teachers who lack supervision that challenges them and causes them to reflect deeply about their teaching might begin to disengage from the profession. Providing supervisory feedback to tenured teachers that is focused and deep enough to elicit instructional change is a challenge for principals, especially novice principals or principals who do not have specific content areas expertise.

Secondly, the gender of teachers has important effects on teachers’ perceptions of leadership and supervision in schools, and gender interaction and leadership characteristics are critical to understanding group and individual dynamics (Eckman, 2004; Ion & Folch, 2009). Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, and Keiser (2012) found “research demonstrates that men and

women have different leadership styles and suggests that subordinates of both genders identify with and prefer one of these” (p. 2). Shakeshaft (2006) posited female teachers working under the leadership of a female principal feel empowered in their classroom; male teachers feel their classroom power is curtailed under the leadership of a female principal. Grissom et al. (2012) concluded:

Female teachers’ outcomes are quite similar under both male and female principals. They are also similar to male teachers who work for men, implying that gender congruence does not matter much in male-led schools. In schools with female principals, however, congruence matters. Male teachers’ satisfaction is lower in those schools...if the principal is female; men tend to have lower satisfaction and higher turnover than their female colleagues. (p. 19)

Summary of Literature

The literature review is designed to frame this study, inform the items included on the survey, and highlight two supervisory issues principals face, namely the time commitment associated with supervision and differentiating the process for novice and experienced teachers. First, as explained in the literature review and used in this study, formal classroom observations occur when teachers have prior knowledge they will be observed and typically follow the clinical supervision model. Conversely, informal classroom observations and classroom walkthroughs occur when teachers do not have prior knowledge they will be observed and are generally shorter than formal observations. Finally, feedback dispensed to teachers about classroom observations is important for teachers’ instructional growth and should be different for teachers based on their developmental level. Thus, these issues of time and differentiation within supervisory processes set the stage for this study.

Context

Five school districts in a Midwest state agreed to participate in the study and were selected because district level leaders agreed to disseminate the survey to teachers. Table 1 displays general demographic information about the school districts.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Five School Districts

District	Total Enrollment	Free/Reduced Lunch %	Average Daily Attendance %	Graduation %	Total Teachers	Teachers' Average Years of Experience
1	2671	51.3	92.2	88	245	15.1
2	4236	49.9	95.5	95	302	12.4
3	2561	69.3	94.1	92	240	14.8
4	1711	62.7	94.6	82	230	13.1
5	2336	65.8	93.7	83	246	11.4

Note: School districts have been assigned a number to protect confidentiality; all school districts had a teacher probationary period of three years

According to district level leaders in each of the five school districts, formal observations followed the clinical supervision cycle (pre-observation conference, formal observation, and post-observation) and lasted approximately 30 minutes to one hour in elementary schools. Because secondary schools (middle schools and high schools) followed a block schedule, formal observations lasted one hour to 90 minutes. Additionally, according to district level leaders, the length of informal observations varied based on school sites, and none of the five school districts mandated principals use classroom walkthroughs as a tool in providing formative supervision. Per state statute in this Midwest state, non-tenured teachers received one formal and one informal observation each year until they reached their tenure year. Tenured teachers received one informal observation each year and one formal observation every five years.

Method

The purpose of this descriptive study was to explore teachers' perceptions about their formative supervision and observational ability of the principals with whom they work using an online survey. The following questions guided the inquiry: (1) how often and for how long are teachers formally and informally observed by principals; (2) how willing are teachers to be observed by principals; and (3) what feedback do teachers receive from principals after observations? An email that explained the purpose of the study and included the survey link was sent to all principals in the five school districts, and they were asked to forward the survey to their teachers. Two reminder emails were sent to non-respondents encouraging them to participate in the survey. In the end, the survey was sent to 1,263 teachers and 255 completed the survey, a response rate of 20%.

Instrument

The instrument used in the data collection was a survey adapted from a previous supervision inquiry (Brown & Coley, 2011) and was designed to measure three constructs concerning principals' formative supervision: (a) how often and for how long principals conducted formally and informal observations, (b) how teachers perceived these observations, and (c) how teachers perceived principals' feedback concerning various indicators of instruction. Five items used a forced choice scale to measure how often and for how long principals conducted formal and informal observations. Four items on the survey used a Likert-scale (1=do not agree, 2=slightly agree, 3=somewhat agree, 4=agree) to measure teachers' willingness to be observed. Seven items on the survey used a Likert scale (1=do not agree, 2=slightly agree, 3=somewhat agree, 4=agree) to measure the perceptions of teachers concerning constructive feedback on seven classroom indicators: (a) curriculum issues, (b) instructional strategies, (c) student engagement, (d) classroom climate, (e) level of thinking, (f) lesson objectives, and (g) reflection. The survey collected demographic information about the respondents and concluded with one open-ended question in which teachers could identify areas of their classroom performance they deemed warranted feedback in improving their instructional practice. In order to determine internal consistency for the instrument, Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated on two sections of the survey. Reliability coefficients included the willingness to be observed items (0.84) and principals' feedback on the seven indicators (0.95). Additionally, to establish content validity, the survey was reviewed by two university faculty with 37 years combined experience supervising teachers and one assistant superintendent for supervision and curriculum in one of the school districts that agreed to participate in the study.

Participants

Of those teachers who responded to the survey, 77.6% (n=190) were female while 19.6% (n=48) were male. Respondents' average years of teaching experience were 15.7 years, with a range of 1 to 43 years. Respondents' average number of years of total teaching experience was 13.81 years, and average number of years teaching in their current school was 7.68. The majority of teachers were tenured (67%; n=164), while 30% (n=73) were non-tenured teachers. Respondents' level of teaching was categorized as follows: (a) 46% (n=111) taught elementary school, (b) 18% (n=43) taught middle school, and (c) 29% (n=69) taught high school.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations and were disaggregated by tenure status and gender. Inferential statistics included independent sample t-tests and effect sizes. Finally, researchers coded respondents' answers to the open-ended question (Namey, Guest, Thairu, & Johnson, 2008). To do this, the researchers first read through respondents' answers to get a general feel for potential themes and then coded themes openly and axially (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Findings

To establish how often principals observed teachers based on tenure status and gender, five forced choice items on the survey asked teachers to select the number and length of formal and informal observations by principals. Table 2 displays this information.

Table 2

Number and Percentages of Formal and Informal Observations by Principals

	Tenure Status		Teacher Type	
	Non N (%)	Tenured N (%)	Male N (%)	Female N (%)
Formal Observations:				
None	2 (3%)	33 (20%)	6(13%)	28 (15%)
Once	18 (25%)	66 (40%)	18 (38%)	66 (35%)
2-4 times	49 (67%)	62 (38%)	23 (48%)	90 (47%)
5-7 times	3 (4%)	2 (1%)	1 (2%)	4 (2%)
8 or more times	1 (1%)	1 (0.6%)	0	2 (1%)
Informal Observations:				
None	6 (8%)	18 (11%)	4 (8%)	21 (11%)
Once	8 (11%)	16 (10%)	5 (10%)	20 (11%)
2-4 times	43 (59%)	77 (47%)	24 (50%)	95 (50%)
5-7 times	10 (14%)	23 (14%)	8 (17%)	25 (13%)
8 or more times	6 (8%)	30 (18%)	7 (15%)	29 (15%)

Note: 17 teachers did not indicate gender; 18 teachers did not indicate tenure status

A majority of non-tenured teachers (n=49; 67%) reported principals formally observed their classrooms two to four times the previous year while tenured teachers (n=66; 40%) reported principals observed their classrooms one time the previous year. Non-tenured teachers (n=43; 59%) and tenured teachers (n=77; 47%) reported similar numbers of informal observations by

principals. When data are viewed through the lens of gender, both male teachers and female teachers reported similar views in regards to formal and informal observations by principals. Both male (n=23; 48%) and female teachers (n=90; 47%) reported principals formally observed them two to four times the previous year, as well as, male teachers (n=24; 50%) and female teachers (n=95; 50%) reported principals informally observed their classroom two to four times the previous year.

Table 3 displays the number and percentages regarding length of time principals spent observing teachers during formal and informal observations.

Table 3

Length of Formal and Informal Classroom Observations by Principals

	Teacher Type		Gender	
	Tenure Status N (%)		N (%)	
	Non	Tenured	Male	Female
Formal Observations:				
Not observed	2 (3%)	28 (17%)	6 (13%)	23 (12%)
Less than 10 minutes	9 (12%)	12 (8%)	7 (15%)	14 (8%)
10-30 minutes	33 (45%)	72 (45%)	20 (42%)	86 (47%)
31-60 minutes	28 (38%)	47 (30%)	15 (31%)	61 (33%)
More than 60 minutes	1 (1%)	0	0	0
Informal Observations:				
Not observed	5 (7%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)
Less than 10 minutes	44 (60%)	16 (10%)	16 (10%)	19 (10%)
10-30 minutes	20 (27%)	110 (68%)	110 (68%)	124 (66%)
31-60 minutes	4 (6%)	36 (22%)	36 (22%)	41 (22%)
More than 60 minutes	0	0	0	4 (2%)

Note: 17 teachers did not indicate gender; 18 teachers did not indicate tenure status

In regards to tenure status, both non-tenured teachers (n=33; 45%) and tenured teachers (n=72; 45%) reported principals' formal observations lasted 10 to 30 minutes. Non-tenured teachers (n=44; 60%) reported principals' informal observations lasted less than 10 minutes

while tenured teachers (n=110; 68%) stated informal observations lasted 10 to 30 minutes. Similarly, both male teachers (n=20; 42%) and female teachers (n=86; 47%) reported principals' formal observations lasted 10 to 30 minutes. Male teachers (n=30; 63%) reported principals' informal classroom visits lasted less than 10 minutes, while female teachers (n=124; 66%) reported principals' informal classroom visits lasted 10 to 30 minutes.

Teachers were asked to rate four statements (1=do not agree to 4=agree) designed to measure their willingness to be observed by principals. Table 4 displays the means, standard deviations, t-test results, and effect sizes for these items. In order to control for an inflated Type I error rate, a Bonferroni adjustment (.05/4) was applied to each of the four t-tests. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's D (Cohen, 1988).

Table 4
Teachers' Willingness to be Observed based on Tenure and Gender

Statement	Tenure Status		t (p)	ES	Gender		t (p)	ES
	Non	Tenured			Male	Female		
	M (SD)	M (SD)			M (SD)	M (SD)		
I welcome visits to my classroom.	3.74 (0.62)	3.63 (0.84)	0.98 (p=0.33)	0.07	3.60 (0.89)	3.68 (0.75)	0.62 (p=0.53)	0.04
I am encouraged after my principal provides feedback	3.51 (0.84)	3.21 (1.08)	2.07 (p=0.04)	0.15	3.31 (1.01)	3.31 (1.02)	0.04 (p=0.97)	0
I believe principal visits to my classroom make me a better teacher	3.37 (0.96)	2.96 (1.21)	2.52 (p=0.01)	0.18	2.94 (1.14)	3.14 (1.15)	1.09 (p=0.28)	0.08
I am encouraged after my principal observes my classroom	3.32 (0.88)	2.90 (1.16)	2.71 (p<0.001)	0.20	2.96 (1.09)	3.05 (1.10)	0.53 (p=0.60)	0.04

Note: Scale ranged from 1=do not agree, 2=slightly agree, 3=somewhat agree, 4=agree; bold type denotes a significant difference at the 0.01 (.05/4) level.

Both non-tenured teachers ($M=3.74$) and tenured teachers ($M=3.63$) agreed the most with the statement *I welcome visits to my classroom by my principal*. When comparing non-tenured and tenured teachers' responses, non-tenured teachers agreed with all statements more than tenured teachers, indicating non-tenured teachers agreed more with willingness to be observed by principals. Finally, results of the independent *t*-tests indicated non-tenured teachers agreed significantly more than tenured teachers that *principal visits to their classrooms made them better teachers* ($t=2.52$, $p=0.01$) and were *encouraged after principal observations* ($t=2.71$, $p<0.001$). Effect sizes for both these items were in the small range indicating tenure has a small effect on teachers' beliefs about the impact of principals' visits to classrooms.

Disaggregating data by gender, both male ($M=3.60$) and female ($M=3.68$) teachers also agreed the most with the same statement *I welcome visits to my classroom by my principal*. When comparing their attitudes, female teachers agreed more than male teachers on three of the four statements: *I welcome visits* ($M=3.68$); *I believe visits make me a better teacher* ($M=3.14$); and *I am encouraged after observations* ($M=3.05$). However, none of these differences were significant.

Teachers were asked to rate seven statements (1=do not agree to 4=agree) designed to measure feedback they received from principals after observations. These seven statements included classroom indicators principals might collect data about during classroom observations and included: (a) student engagement, (b) classroom climate, (c) instructional strategies, (d) reflection, (e) lesson objectives, (f) curriculum issues, and (g) students' level of thinking. Table 5 displays the means, standard deviations, *t*-test results, and effect sizes for these items. In order to control for an inflated Type I error rate, a Bonferroni adjustment ($.05/7$) was applied to each of the seven *t*-tests. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's *D* (Cohen, 1988).

Table 5

Teachers' Perceptions about Principals' Feedback based on Tenure and Gender

	Tenure Status				Gender			
	Non	Tenured			Male	Female		
Feedback:	M (SD)	M (SD)	t (p)	ES	M (SD)	M (SD)	t (p)	ES
On climate of classroom	3.32 (0.96)	2.98 (1.11)	2.20 (p=0.03)	0.16	2.77 (1.11)	3.17 (1.05)	2.31 (p=0.02)	0.18
On student engagement	3.32 (0.95)	2.93 (1.12)	2.73 (p<0.001)	0.18	2.77 (1.13)	3.12 (1.07)	2.01 (p=0.05)	0.16
On instructional strategies	3.07 (1.05)	2.88 (1.11)	1.20 (p=0.23)	0.09	2.60 (1.16)	3.03 (1.07)	2.41 (p=0.02)	0.19
Causes me to reflect	3.10 (0.95)	2.81 (1.15)	2.00 (p=0.05)	0.14	2.67 (1.17)	2.96 (1.07)	1.65 (p=0.10)	0.13
On curriculum issues	3.07 (1.11)	2.80 (1.22)	1.64 (p=0.10)	0.11	2.54 (1.11)	2.98 (1.20)	2.31 (p=0.02)	0.19
On students' level of thinking	2.99 (1.02)	2.73 (1.12)	1.64 (p=0.10)	0.12	2.55 (1.10)	2.87 (1.08)	1.81 (p=0.72)	0.15
On lesson objectives	2.92 (1.11)	2.75 (1.13)	1.02 (p=0.31)	0.08	2.46 (1.07)	2.89 (1.13)	2.39 (p=0.02)	0.19

Note: Scale ranged from 1=do not agree, 2=slightly agree, 3=somewhat agree, 4=agree; bold type denotes a significant difference at the 0.00 (.05/7) level.

Non-tenured teachers agreed the most principals provided *feedback about their classroom climate* (M=3.32) and about *student engagement* (M=3.32). Tenured teachers agreed most principals provided *feedback concerning classroom climate* (M=2.98). Non-tenured teachers agreed more with all seven statements than tenured teachers indicating a more positive attitude about principals' feedback after classroom observations. Results of the independent *t*-tests indicated non-tenured teachers agreed significantly more than tenured teachers that principals provided them *feedback on student engagement* ($t=2.73$, $p<0.001$), and the effect size for this item was in the small range indicating tenure has a small effect on teachers' perceptions about principals' feedback on student engagement.

When looking at data through the lens of gender, male teachers agreed with all but one of the seven statements, with their lowest rated statement being principals' feedback on lesson objectives (M=2.46). Female teachers agreed more strongly with all seven statements when

compared to male teachers. Female teachers agreed most principals provided *feedback about their classroom climates* ($M=3.17$), while male teachers agreed most principals provided *feedback on the climate of their classrooms* and on *student engagement*. There were no significant differences on any of the statements in regards to gender.

To further understand teachers' desires about feedback they expected from principals after classroom visits, respondents' answers to the open-ended item that asked teachers to describe constructive feedback they expected from principals were coded by the researchers. Initial coding resulted in 15 general themes that were collapsed into three specific themes and included principals' feedback on *student engagement*, *classroom management*, and *instructional strategies*. Several respondents' answers identified at least two of these themes in the same response. For example, one respondent stated, "I expect feedback on how well students were engaged, how well I meet curriculum objectives, and how well I manage my classroom."

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to ascertain teachers' perceptions concerning principals' formative supervision and can be summarized as follows: (a) there was no discernible patterns that emerged in regards to the number and length of formal and informal observations by principals based on teachers' tenure status or gender; (b) non-tenured teachers were more willing to be observed by principals than tenured teachers, and non-tenured teachers agreed significantly more than tenured teachers that principals' visits to their classrooms improved their instruction. Additionally, non-tenured teachers were more positive about receiving feedback from principals concerning seven classroom behaviors (curriculum issues, instructional strategies, student engagement, classroom climate, level of thinking, lesson objectives, and reflection) than tenured teachers, and non-tenured teachers agreed significantly more than tenured teachers that principals provided them constructive feedback about student engagement in the classrooms; (c) although none of the comparisons were significant, female teachers rated a majority of the willingness to be observed items higher than male teachers, and female teachers were more positive about feedback received from principals on all seven classroom behaviors than male teachers. Both findings indicate female teachers were more positive than male teachers about formative supervision processes dispensed by principals; and (d) results from both the quantitative data and open-ended item analysis indicated teachers expected principals to provide constructive feedback about student engagement in their classrooms.

Regarding the views of non-tenured and tenured teachers in this study, Zepeda (2013) posited principals face a predicament in providing formative supervision to non-tenured teachers and tenured teachers because their needs are very different. Study findings support Zepeda's description of the career stages and developmental needs of teachers because non-tenured teachers' attitudes about willingness to be observed seem to align with career stage 4, labeled *enthusiasm*, in which teachers have high job satisfaction. That is, non-tenured teachers' attitudes about principals' observations indicate they perceive feedback on many classroom tasks as important, a trait that might be perceived as a flaw because it causes non-tenured teachers to be unfocused on those instructional behaviors that have the highest impact on student performance (Hattie, 2012). Additionally, results concur with Range, Young, and Hvidston (2013) who argued non-tenured teachers typically struggle with low level teaching behaviors like lesson planning, classroom management, and time management. Because such behaviors can be easily remediated when principals provide immediate feedback, this might cause non-tenured teachers

to view supervision provided by principals as more effective than tenured teachers. Tenured teachers may not receive as much direct contact with principals and might not receive similar feedback on basic classroom structures.

Additionally, results highlight differences in how male teachers perceive feedback and willingness to be observed by principals when compared to female teachers. Male teachers were less positive about principals' feedback and classroom observations than female teachers, and results support studies that highlight the differences in how male and female teachers view principals' leadership (Guramatunhu-Mudiwa & Bolt, 2012; Shakeshaft, 2006). The researchers speculate that because most respondents were female elementary teachers, they were likely supervised by female principals and results would support literature that reports female teachers are more positive about the leadership of female principals, while male teachers are less positive about their leadership.

Implications

Results from this study provide implications for practice surrounding the demographic variables explored in this study. Principals should acknowledge the varied needs of non-tenured and tenured teachers and apply differentiated support to both groups. For non-tenured teacher supervision, the challenge for principals is to start small regarding supervisory feedback. That is, non-tenured teachers typically struggle with low level teaching behaviors including student management, and most struggle to gain confidence in their own abilities as they attempt to find their place in school cultures. As a result, supervisory feedback provided by principals to non-tenured teachers should be highly focused and principal directed. For example, principals might select to provide feedback on only two classroom indicators (i.e. student engagement and lesson objectives) throughout the school year, as well as, provide support regarding classroom management. The end goal of this strategy is to provide support to non-tenured teachers based on management problems literature has routinely illuminated they encounter and not overwhelm them with feedback on classroom variables they do not yet have the confidence to address.

Additionally, principals' supervision of tenured teachers has to be equally well-planned and focused, as the results indicate tenured teachers were less positive about principals' formative supervisory classroom observations and feedback. The researchers assume the skill sets of tenured teachers are well developed, resulting in confidence concerning many of the classroom traits measured in this study. As a result, the challenge for principals is to keep tenured teachers' enthusiasm for instructional growth at high levels. A primary way in which principals might foster the importance of formative supervision with tenured teachers is through teacher leadership initiatives. To do this, principals might actively engage high-performing tenured teachers to share instructional leadership responsibilities like aligning curriculum, setting school-wide instructional foci, analyzing student data, and leading peers in meaningful ways.

Furthermore, results provide insight into the views of male teachers concerning their willingness to be observed and the feedback received from principals after classroom observations. It is important for female principals to consider the needs of male teachers and their potential responses to supervisory feedback as past literature has suggested male teachers are less receptive to feedback dispensed by female principals. As a result, educational administration programs that train aspiring principals should present literature that highlights gender's nexus with leadership, which illuminates the leadership styles of male and female principals and how the gender of teachers might impact receptivity of supervisory feedback.

Finally, a further implication centers on the supervisory ability of novice versus experienced principals. Experienced principals should be able to devote more time to supervision and should be better able to differentiate the process for teachers than novice principals. Experienced principals should have a better grasp on managerial issues that typically divert time away from supervision, and as a result, are better at providing instructional leadership than novice principals. Districts that hire novice principals should acknowledge this shortcoming and provide support to novice principals as they attempt to become instructional leaders. Additionally, educational administration programs that train aspiring principals need to be forthright in their instruction about the challenges novice principals face and provide their students with concrete ways in which they can oversee managerial leadership tasks.

Limitations

This small teacher supervision study is limited in that data were collected from principals in five school districts in a Midwest state. As a result, generalizing the results of this study to other states is debatable. Additionally, the study had the following limitations: (a) the response rate to the survey was 20%; (b) data were collected from teachers and not from principals; (c) data were not collected on the gender of principals, as such data would be important to correlate the views of male teachers to either supervising male or female principals; and (d) data were not collected on the experience of principals, as more experienced principals might devote more time to formative supervision and might be better at differentiating the process for teachers. To further support the findings of this study by applying these limitations, the researchers recommend a similar study be conducted which collects information from principals including their perceptions about supervision, their years of experience, and their gender. Additionally, the researchers argue a qualitative study in which principals and teachers were interviewed about time devoted to supervision and how supervision processes might be differentiated would provide more in-depth information for practitioners and researchers.

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