

**Usurpation or Abdication of Instructional Supervision  
in the New York City Public Schools?**

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### **Abstract**

This paper reports on an ongoing 3-year study of the current status of instructional supervision within New York City public schools. Under the influence of a centralized and bureaucratically managed system (i.e., top down initiatives), educational reform in New York City has had serious consequences for both the theory and practice of instructional supervision. Supervision, for the most part, remains a monitoring or inspectional task reminiscent of older forms of supervision. Although reform measures address the need for increased supervision and professional development, principals and their assistants perform predominantly non-instructional duties and evaluative functions. Supervision, as a means to promote instructional dialogue to improve teaching in the classroom, has been the responsibility primarily (although unofficially) of coaches (a position created in the restructuring of schools). Results from this descriptive study indicate that these coaches have little, if any, formal training in supervision. An underlying motif or question of this study is the extent to which supervision as improvement of instruction has been abdicated by principals or usurped by coaches (not personally but as a result of bureaucratic and administrative fiat) given their charge to work with teachers in the classroom. Factors that precipitated such a situation are explored by reports from interviews with New York City public school teachers (previous research study), coaches (previous research study), principals, and assistant principals. To shed a realistic light on these and related matters, the presenters have invited a former coach and current assistant principal to offer first-hand experiences. She will offer first-hand testimony regarding reform efforts and the status of instructional supervision in New York City. The final phase of the study will ensue over the course of the next year by assessing the impact of reform measures and supervisory practices on classroom teaching and student achievement.

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### **Introduction: A Retrospective of Instructional Supervision in a Standards-based Environment**

Since this paper represents the second in a series of three research studies around the same topic, the theoretical background remains similar to the one presented in last year's AERA presentation (Glanz, Shulman, & Sullivan, 2005). Also, a detailed review of specific New York City (NYC) curricular reforms including literacy and mathematics initiatives will not be reiterated here. Still, placing this phase of the research in context for readers unfamiliar with the conceptual framework provided earlier is necessary, at least in a briefer format. In doing so, we place instructional supervision in historical context that helps explain the emergence and sustenance of standards-based supervision. Writ large, standards-based education over the past half decade has had serious implications for the theory and practice of instructional supervision. We examine its manifestations in the public schools of NYC.

The national movement towards standards-based education, including high-stakes testing, has served to legitimize and bolster local reform proposals such as those mandated in NYC. Raising standards and promoting uniformity of curricular offerings to raise academic achievement has been a long established reform proposal (Seguel, 1966). Present efforts at establishing national or state standards should be viewed within a historic context. The first significant attempt to improve and "modernize" the American curriculum occurred in the 1890s. The Committee of Ten, issued its report in 1892 under the leadership of Charles W. Eliot, the president of Harvard University. The Committee sought to establish new curriculum standards for high school students. Standards were established to enable all students to receive a high quality academic curriculum (Kliebard, 1987).

Notwithstanding the lofty aims of this committee, it wasn't until the establishment of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education that the school curriculum actually changed. The commission issued its report in 1918 and advocated a diversified curriculum that made allowances for a variety of curriculum "tracks" for the varied abilities of students. Known as the "Cardinal Principles of Education," the findings of this commission endorsed a differentiated curriculum that emphasized, in part, the importance of vocational training for a large segment of students (Krug, 1964).

During the first half of the twentieth century, the College Entrance Examination Board (formed in the 1890s), the Scholastic Aptitude Test (the first SAT was administered in 1926), and the American College Testing Program (established in 1959) were the guardians of standards, as applied to the academic curriculum. As a result of the Russian launch of the first artificial satellite (Sputnik) in 1957, American education was attacked vociferously. Only months after the Sputnik launching, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) which poured millions of dollars into mathematics,

sciences, and engineering. For several years following Sputnik, enrollments in high schools increased dramatically as did achievement scores in many academic areas. Academic standards, up until this time, continued to be driven by levels of student achievement and assessed by national standardized tests (Ravitch, 1995).

By the mid-sixties, however, the American school curriculum shifted from an academic orientation to a nonacademic one. Prompted by political and social reforms, educational reformers reconsidered their longstanding emphasis on academic curriculum standards. The easing of high school graduation and college entrance requirements were just two of many effects of educational reforms during this tumultuous era. Yet, by the late 1970s criticism of nonacademic curricula focused on declining SAT scores and what was perceived of as a general lowering of standards. With the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, an era of unprecedented educational reform, focusing on a conservative political and educational agenda, was about to begin.

With the publication of the “A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform” report, by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), attention was drawn to the assertion that schools had lowered their standards too much and that American students were not competitive with their international counterparts. The authors of this 1983 report were perturbed by the fact that American school children lagged behind students in other industrialized nations. The National Commission on Excellence in Education reported that, among students from various industrialized nations, U.S. students scored lowest on 7 of 19 academic tests and failed to score first or second on any test. Similar results were reported by the Educational Testing Service (1992). Moreover, the study found that nearly 40 percent of U.S. 17-year-olds couldn't perform higher-order thinking skills.

Pressure to improve the quality of American education by articulating concrete standards for performance increased. Consequently, a spate of national and state reports continued through the 1980s, each advocating fundamental educational change. Commitment to democratic ideals and the influence of public education was reinforced once again in 1986 with the publication of the report, sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation, “A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century” (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986) and the Holmes (1986) report. The national curriculum reform movement was catapulted into prominence and action with the Education Summit held in 1989 by then President George Bush and state governors. A year later, in his State of the Union Address, President Bush affirmed his commitment to excellence in education by establishing six national education goals to be achieved by the year 2000. Signed into law by Congress during the Clinton administration on March 31, 1994, “Goals 2000” proclaimed, in part, that by the year 2000 “U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement” and “Every school will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.”

The adoption of national goals has been a major impetus for the increased attention to standards at the state level. In 1991, the U.S. Congress established the National Council on Educational Standards and Testing (NCEST) that encouraged educators and

politicians to translate somewhat vague national goals into content curriculum standards. NCEST recommended that educators establish specific standards in specific subject areas. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) led the way by publishing standards that quickly influenced textbook companies and testing agencies. These national curriculum reforms inevitably affected state educational reforms. More than 40 states have revised their curricula to reflect the standards they established.

Continuing in the tradition of standards-based education, President George W. Bush signed into law the “No Child Left Behind Act of 2001,” a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Legislation of 1965. The purpose of the new legislation was to redefine the federal role in K-12 education and to help raise student achievement, especially for disadvantaged and minority students. Four basic principles were evident: stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that presumably have been proven to work.

What can the history of standards-based education teach us about the current interest in revising curriculum and raising standards in NYC? Striking is the persistence of reform efforts and the influence of political and ideological agenda on national and state educational policies. Since the emergence of public education, attempts to improve curricular standards have abounded. Over the last hundred years or so, the American school curriculum has been influenced by different philosophies and ideological frameworks (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995). Yet, since the election of President Reagan in 1980, an essentialist and perennialist orientation has held sway in education, that was not thwarted by the election and re-election of President Clinton. This ideological commitment, spurred on by conservative political alliances explain why so much emphasis has been placed on a call for the return to traditional academic content, usually in the form of core curriculum standards.

With the exploding knowledge and information ages and the rapid changes in technology, a growing demand for internationally competitive workers placed inordinate pressures on schools. Schools have been continually pressured to confront society’s economic and social crises. Consequently, an advocacy for standards has been promulgated. Myopic stakeholders have not considered the complexities of school reform. Even Ravitch (1995), an advocate of standards, reminds us that “. . . a system of standards . . . , no matter how reliable, will not solve all the problems of American education. It will not substitute for the protection of a loving family, it will not guard children against the violence of the streets, it will not alleviate poverty, and it will not turn off the television at night.” (p. 186). Standards-based reform efforts have been criticized from many quarters for different reasons as elucidated in detail in Glanz, Shulman and Sullivan (2005). Suffice it to say, that critics lament the imposition of reform measures by administrative fiat and question its effectiveness to promote student learning.

Supervision is best understood within this larger context. Although supervision evolved from crude and unsophisticated bureaucratic practices in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to more refined democratic participatory approaches of instructional improvement recent efforts at

standardizing curriculum within a high stakes accountability milieu has transformed supervision into an inspectional function reminiscent of its early days (Glanz, Shulman, & Sullivan, 2005). Data from this latter study demonstrates that given the drive towards high stakes testing in a standards-driven educational environment, at least as played out in the schools we previously surveyed in NYC, supervisory practice has been characterized as a perfunctory function utilizing checklist approaches. The pressure practitioners face to raise student achievement as measured on high-stakes tests is enormous. Principals and assistant principals are more accountable than ever to address prescribed core curriculum standards, promote teaching to the standards, and ensure higher student academic performance on standardized tests. Consequently, those concerned with supervision have been more inclined to incorporate supervisory practices that are a throwback to the 1930's, 1940s, and 1950s. Directive approaches of supervision find justification within a standards-based educational milieu. Examples of such supervisory practices were described in the previous study by surveying teachers and coaches, primarily.

Given this contextual background, Glanz, Shulman, and Sullivan (2005) set out to describe the impact of high stakes testing and a standardized curriculum on the nature and practice of instructional supervision. They used surveys to assess how NYC teachers and coaches viewed instructional supervision under new reform initiatives that served to standardize curriculum and increase principal authority, among other measures. They also looked at the role of professional development and its relationship to supervision of instruction. Findings included:

- A lack of instructional supervision in the current standards-based environment
- A virtually non-existent relationship between professional development and instructional supervision.
- A teachers' view of the role of administrators as increasingly evaluative, undemocratic and even inconsequential in its impact on improving instruction

An additional result is instructive:

- The 1996 union (United Federation of Teachers - UFT) contract provision permitting tenured teachers to choose alternatives to the traditional observation process is still virtually unknown and seldom implemented. This means that most teachers are unaware of an option that would encourage inquiry and meaningful reflection about teaching practice in close partnership with colleagues and supervisors. Instead, teachers engage in the traditional "Dog and Pony Show" of observations by a supervisor of a "model" lesson followed by a write-up noting "commendations" and "recommendations" (Sullivan Shulman, & Glanz, 2002).

This paper continues the previous study by further examining the impact of these reforms on the nature and practice of instructional supervision by surveying school administrators, primarily.

### **Methods and Data Sources**

Eighty surveys were sent out to administrators in the NYC area and 24 were returned. As the study continues into its third year the researchers intend to expand the sample by continuing to solicit respondent participation based on a stratified random sampling at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Permission to conduct such large scale survey research is currently being sought through the NYC Department of Education. This paper reports on survey results and in depth interviews conducted with seven principals, five assistant principals, and eight coaches during the 2005-2006 academic year.

Typically, the researchers carried out individual, one-on-one semi-structured interviews (Yin, 1994) with participants, transcribed the interviews verbatim, and checked them for accuracy. To maintain anonymity, participants were identified only by whether they were coaches, principals or assistant principals. Researchers employed triangulation procedures to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation of data and to clarify the meaning of our interviews and observations. While multiple data sources (including interviews, observations and documents) were used for triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, Merriam, 1998), findings reported are primarily from interviews. Documents that provided supplemental information, included observation evaluations prepared by supervisors, and curriculum descriptions. Interview questions for coaches and administrators included:

- Has supervision of instruction changed since the implementation of the literacy and math initiatives?
- What does the supervision process look like in your school?
  - a. What is the role of the principal?
  - b. What is the role of the assistant principal?
- What is the role of the coach in the process of supervision of instruction?
- What does professional development look like in your school?

The validity of the data collection procedure was confirmed by a considerable amount of member checking. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe this method, where data and interpretations are taken back to the participants for confirmation, as an important technique in establishing credibility of the research. In this particular case, participants were asked to review the findings and to indicate whether themes and conclusions made sense. The depth and variety of the data collection procedures that researchers adopted recommend the validity of the findings and conclusions.

Ethnographic-type field observations were also conducted but are not reported upon at this time.

## Results

### *Supervision of instruction under the new mathematics and literacy initiatives*

Administrators responded that supervision has become more focused since the implementation of math and literacy initiatives. Administrators report that they need to be more knowledgeable and involved in ensuring that teachers implement the new initiatives. The conduit to ensuring that new initiatives are implemented is the coach. In the words of one principal:

The change to Balanced Literacy and Everyday Math has only provided the specific things to look for in the classroom, but it is the coaches that have had the larger impact.

The new focus on the coach as informal instructional supervisor is described by one principal as follows:

While supervision of instruction is still the responsibility of the administrator, the literacy and math coaches are often called upon to facilitate the observation and supervision process. Coaches are often directed by administrators or requested by teachers to go into classrooms and work with teachers to model lessons or share best practices. In this way, the coach acts as a follow up to an administrator's observation of a teacher or assistant teacher in preparing for an observation. Essentially it is a "grey" area that is still being defined and may have different meanings in different schools

Coaches and administrators spoke about the evaluation aspect of formal supervision as unchanged. Principals and APs typically use the preconference-observation and post-conference model for tenured and untenured teachers. Some principals reported using narratives rather than checklists for the observation method, yet sometimes that choice was constrained by regional demands. As one principal explained:

In the school where I work, a narrative is used. However, in Region 7, all teachers had been given a list of "regional bottom lines" in September. This provided an outline of what behaviors and classroom characteristics are expected. For example, teachers should engage students in small group instruction; elementary classrooms should have word walls. In my opinion, it gave the "checklist" for both teachers and administrators.

Option A, the alternative form of evaluation offered to tenured teachers (Sullivan Shulman, & Glanz, 2002), is rarely used. One principal, experienced in instructional leadership, spoke about her desire to empower teachers to create their own instructional areas of focus. Yet these teachers are still being evaluated using traditional formal observation. When asked why teachers were not encouraged to use option A, she mused, "I never thought of that."

### *The Role of Administrators*

Principals with little experience in instructional leadership serve as “CEOs”, or managers, who concern themselves with budgets, scheduling and evaluation. In these schools, improvement of instruction is relegated to coaches and/or APs who have experience with the new literacy and math initiatives.

One AP described the difference between her role and that of her principal in instructional supervision as follows:

I do most of the instruction because he [principal] doesn't have the background. We have a literacy coach who was good at K-2 and she works with those teachers. I do all 3- 5 teachers. He [principal] just does the regular observation. He observes people with a pre-conference and goes in and does a post. He doesn't model anything. He'll tell me or the coach of a problem and we'll share the strategies.

One literacy coach bemoaned the lack of instructional expertise on the part of principals as follows:

...I never remember a principal or an AP showing teachers how to teach. Teachers came in, created their lesson plan, aim and motivation, and the administrators observed and evaluated. The difference is that coaches are now working closely with teachers to help them with plan with instruction and to prepare for formal observation. Supervision hasn't changed. That part is in place. The big change is that teachers are required to follow the new mandates and the principals don't know how to show teachers what to do and that's where coaches came in.

Administrators who are schooled in the new math and literacy initiatives, and experienced as instructional leaders view themselves as responsible in supporting teachers and ensuring that new initiatives are implemented. One principal describes her involvement in the day-to-day life of the classroom as follows:

My AP supervises Pre-K to 2 and I do [grades] 3-5. Technically. But I go in every class every day, and so does my AP. It's not about watching what is going on – it's about getting involved and making sure the climate is right....We are in the classrooms at least 2 hours per day.

In sum, while formal supervision of instruction falls within the domain of the principal or AP (or both), there is a convergence of opinion on the part of principals, APs and coaches in acknowledgement of the increasingly dominant role of the coach in providing instructional support. In schools where the principal was also the instructional leader, the relationship among principals, APs, coaches and teachers was described as collaborative. One principal described this relationship as follows:

My coach, my instructional team and I collaborate closely on the instructional framework that drives the teaching and learning in my school... We follow the lead of the staff in regard to designing professional development.

### *The Role of the Coach*

Both administrators and coaches viewed the coach as the instructional mentor. For principals who were instructional leaders, the coaches were collaborators, responsible for helping teachers to implement initiatives. In schools where principals had little instructional experience, the coaches became the primary instructional mentor for teachers.

Coaches who assumed increasing responsibilities in helping novice and struggling teachers to prepare for formal observation, reported feeling uncomfortable evaluating teachers, despite the fact that this was done informally. One coach said that while she does informal observations, she doesn't write anything down because "my position is a teacher line. They don't want teachers to feel I'm a supervisor." Another coach said, .."She [principal] wants me to report back to her, which is very uncomfortable for me, as I walk a fine line between staff and administration."

One coach described the burden of having to formally document support given to struggling teachers as follows:

When a principal gives a teacher a "U" for an observation, the principal has to prove that he has supported the teacher. The coach has to document how much support the teacher has received. So, as a coach, I have to document everything.

Principals also voiced the difficulties that occur when the role of the coach becomes blurred. Several administrators referred to this role as a "gray area," with the coach being both an instructional mentor and informal supervisor who reports to the administration. One principal, in instructional leader, spoke about the difficulties she experienced with coaches having ill-defined roles:

When I came here...coaches had become supervisors and this led to animosity. Teachers had too many people to answer to and they were getting mixed messages. Coaches were almost overstepping their lines. It was a real problem. I had to work at building a climate of trust with teachers and work with coaches to let them know their roles.

Asked by one of the researchers if this was a widespread occurrence, this principal replied:

Yes. If you get a strong lead teacher you get this kind of thing. So you have to be careful how you pick the coaches. You need the same vision.

Coaches spoke about the frustrations that they feel because, as coaches, they do not have the power to ensure follow up of the instructional practices that they are modeling. In the words of one veteran coach:

The gossip behind the scenes is that coaches need to become supervisors, and a lot of coaches get frustrated because there is no follow-up. We don't have the supervisory input to say to a teacher "you really need to do this." We do all the legwork to help teachers, but if a teacher says, "I don't like this, give me back my basal reader" - And there are plenty of people who say that. Then what? You need the supervisor to say that you have no choice. And the coaches can't say that. And a lot of times the principal doesn't insist and the school doesn't move forward.

*Professional Development and Instructional Supervision:*

Previously, when asked about the role of supervision in professional development (PD), administrators and coaches spoke about the lack of professional development geared to instructional support, due to the need to use PD hours to address regional initiatives. With the more recent loss of the 100-110 hours of PD, school administrators and staff are at a loss about how to fit in any professional development. In the words of one principal: "Given the new 37 ½ minutes, there is no time for formal professional development."

Another principal stated:

I am only grateful that it [losing PD time] happened after we had started our journey... My staff recognizes the need for focused professional development that is aligned with school initiatives.

Another principal wrote about needing to structure PD differently due to time constraints:

Due to time constraints and the need to disseminate information to many individuals, PD is often handled in a way that is top-down, large group, with little discussion. The format is the exact opposite of what we believe good instruction should look like and it seems to be the way we revert to when dealing with our faculty.

Another spoke about the need for PD to be differentiated due to diverse faculty needs and experiences. However, differentiated PD rarely happens, again due to lack of time.

*Significance of experience in instructional initiatives*

Several school administrators mentioned the significance attributed by the Department of Education to hiring administrative staff with previous experience in instructional leadership. One principal who has recently been hired to head a school in a borough and neighborhood in which she had no previous experience discussed her surprise at being placed in her particular school:

I got my job because I was a coach. I know on one in [this borough]. I did professional development for principals the summer before I got my job. The Local Instructional Superintendent (LIS) was there... I think people need to be in jobs who know about instruction and that is why I have my job. I think more people who were in those positions are getting jobs... There is so much pressure to know and to do and be part of the initiative.

One coach remarked:

Anyone with a background in instruction is moving up and out. The LIS puts pressure on principals. Principals are trying to learn about instruction and move their schools.

## **Discussion**

In order to discuss whether the role of supervision of instruction has changed since the implementation of Chancellor Klein's initiatives in 2003, we must first define what is meant by "supervision of instruction" in this context. For the purposes of this study, we distinguish supervision of instruction from evaluation of instruction. The formal evaluation process with its primary concern the reappointment and tenuring of faculty, has not changed either in the union contract or in practice. Untenured teachers are supposed to be observed three times a year and tenured teachers once a year. The innovative Option A that permits tenured teachers to use an alternative form of evaluation remains in the contract, but is rarely chosen. We define "supervision of instruction" "as that process which utilizes a wide array of strategies, methodologies, and approaches aimed at improving instruction and promoting educational leadership as well as change (Glanz & Behar-Horenstein, 2000, p. 85). We have looked at improvement of instruction in the current context of the NYC Department of Education which involves administrators, coaches, mentors, and professional development.

We have found that the process of supervision and evaluation of instruction at the school level depends primarily on whether the principal functions as an instructional leader. Not only are the principal's practices impacted by whether the administrator is an instructional leader or not, the role of the coach and the AP also depend on whether the administrator is an instructional leader. When the principal performs as a manager, supervision of instruction, e.g., working on the implementation of the mandated initiatives, is delegated to APs and/or coaches, because the managerial leaders are not capable of observing effectively the new instructional initiatives.

A second finding is that since the new initiatives have been implemented over the past three years, the supervisors that are hired are increasingly former coaches or staff developers, and for the most part, place instructional leadership at the center of their vision. One of the APs noted: "I think people need to be in jobs who know about instruction and that is why I have my job. I think more people who were in those positions are getting jobs." Comments from several recently hired administrators

describe this transformation in leadership style. “The previous principal was more interested in how the school looked, interested in grants. He did observations but didn’t do informal. He didn’t have training in literacy and math, so he didn’t know what to look for.” Another novice administrator opined that “It seems to me in the past that coaches ran education and principals ran building, but I don’t know- I wasn’t here.”

If the recent administrative hires come from instructional backgrounds and if they are more “focused” as they claim on supporting the implementation of the new initiatives, why then did the majority of the teachers we surveyed in a previous study (Glanz, Shulman, & Sullivan, 2005) bemoan the lack of administrative instructional supervision and the emphasis on the “dog and pony” show evaluatory process?

Several possible explanations exist for this apparent discrepancy. First, this year is the third year of implementation of the initiatives. With the ongoing retirement of administrators and the hiring of more instructionally oriented supervisors, a change in the process of improving instruction may be taking place. Second, although the newer administrators may be more instructionally oriented, the evaluation rules have not changed in the union contract or at the NYC Department of Education. Therefore, the traditional evaluatory methods continue alongside the instructional support, be it from coaches or administrators. In addition, the Metlife Survey of the American Teacher (2005) revealed that administrators rated themselves more highly than their teachers did. This discrepancy may account in part for some of the differences in perceptions in this study. Another explanation many involve the additional building responsibilities that NYC administrators have assumed over the last three years with respect to budgeting and other administrative areas. The Department of Education has made “instructional leadership” one of its priorities. In this environment of accountability and mandates, the principals are at least “talking the talk” of instructional leadership and the supportive role of the coaches, but teachers are living the reality. One coach was revealing when she said that the new principal is “more of an instructional leader, though so many things are going on that she can’t devote the time to instruction, professional development....She has a vision and is trying to get them where they should be. She’s overwhelmed with budget, etc.” Thus, what may be happening is that even the instructionally oriented leaders are so overwhelmed with site-based managerial responsibilities that they may not be devoting as much time to instructional leadership as they intend to or think they are, thereby creating the discrepancy between what the teachers are experiencing and what the administrators think they are doing. The larger question is whether devolving managerial responsibilities and instructional leadership to one principal is feasible in large urban schools?

An important theme is the repeated reference to teachers, coaches, and administrators from District 20 as having little or no difficulty implementing the Math and literacy programs because of their previous training. One AP commented about the recently hired principal: “And the new principal has training. She was staff developer, in a district where they had it. She knew what to do, send out teachers for intervisitations, she debriefs with them after, looking for reading, writing, making sure that teachers are seeing it.” A novice AP confirmed this finding:

I've had the benefit of working in District 20 where there were literacy initiatives in place for four to six years. So I didn't see much of a change in literacy. As far as math – the methodology wasn't new. The workshop model was to be used with everything.

In contrast, in schools where the math and literacy initiatives represent a “paradigm shift” from “chalk and talk” to the “workshop model,” resistance has been pronounced. One new principal comments that “For me it was not new, for my staff which was very traditional, the change was daunting.” A new assistant principal confirmed the challenge: “I came from a school where we had been implementing it. Coming to Staten Island where everyone is teaching the old fashioned way, we won't make changes unless we do it.”

Our surveys and interviews confirm the research findings dating from the 1980s on the change process (Bass, 1985; Fullan, 1999, 2003); it takes approximately ten years for reform to be internalized. The top-down reform measures have been most effective where similar initiatives had been in place for years. These schools and districts had a tradition of working with the Teachers College literacy project, the Australian literacy staff developers (AUSSIEs), Marilyn Burns in math, etc. In schools and regions where there was no transition, there has been resistance or distortion of the goals of the initiatives. McFayden (2005) reported that “The principal of IS 230 in Queens gave stopwatches to math and English teachers this October to help keep their mini-lessons to the allotted 10 minutes.” Teachers complain about being forced to sit in rocking chairs, to buy rugs, and to get rid of their desks. The monitoring “walk-throughs” (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase, & Poston, Jr., 2004) also enforce standardization. All classrooms have to contain the same elements. These consequences resonate with Chomsky's (2002) remarks that teaching cannot be standardized or reduced into ready-made recipes or prescriptions. Teaching is a highly complex and contextual intellectual activity that challenges and engages learners with concrete experiences, intellectual discourse, and reflective thought. Many of the highest level teachers who are teaching through the alternate-route programs feel intellectually stifled. This standardization may be one of the causes of their high dropout rate or transfer to suburban districts with higher pay and fewer demands (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005). In fall of 2004, Chancellor Klein decreed two Mondays of after-school professional development across NYC. Both coaches and administrators spoke about regional initiatives that often consume professional development hours at the expense of much needed instructional support (Glanz, Shulman, & Sullivan, 2005). The surveys indicated that only when the coaches planned sessions related to their work with teachers in the classroom was the response more positive.

The recent elimination of professional development with the implementation of the new union contract (February 2006) is consistent with the general practice of mandating initiatives that do not work if they are not fostered from the bottom up. Currently, instead of the 110 minutes of professional development for faculty, at-risk students are given 37 ½ minutes of extra instruction three days a week, in groups of no more than 10. In schools where there are not sufficient at-risk students, any student can receive the

supplementary instruction. In schools where the number of low-scoring students exceeds site capacity, some high need students do not receive the supplementary instruction. Individual schools have no say in the use of the time. The quality of professional development is no longer the question – its very existence is. The most optimistic administrators talk about using once a week common planning time, grade conferences, being “creative,” etc. The extended time results in teachers being so tired after the additional instruction that they do not want to remain for after-school professional development even if they are paid.

Findings about the role of the coach are instructive. Administrators, coaches, and teachers all acknowledge the central role of the coach in providing instructional support. Coaches who serve as the primary instructional mentors report feeling burdened by having to mediate between their role as instructional mentor for teachers and that of informal supervisor, providing feedback to principals.

The recent administrator interviews confirm the gray area status of the coach. One of the instructionally oriented administrators remarked:

My coach, my instructional Team and I collaborate closely on the instructional framework that drives the teaching and learning in my school. My coach is very familiar with the approaches and methods...she spends 80% of her time in the classrooms coaching and supporting the staff. She too supervises the staff informally (no formal observations or write ups). She not only demonstrates, but she observes, debriefs, and coaches teachers carefully.

Most important is the fact that the coaches are only trained in the literacy and math initiatives that they are supposed to coach (where shortages of coaches exist, especially in math, some are assigned without training). They have no formal training in classroom observation. Given their mentoring and quasi supervisory status in many schools, teachers are faced with de facto untrained supervision.

## **Conclusion**

Reform initiatives in NYC have only recently been examined to any extent. Although the reform efforts in NYC are only a few years old, many aspects of the reform initiatives need deeper analysis. This study examines more specifically the role of instructional supervision. Supervision is vital to enhance instructional dialogue in order to promote reflection to improve teaching and learning. This study is important because it cites evidence about the efficacy of supervision to accomplish its objectives within a major school reform effort. Also of great import is the role of principals and professional development in these reform initiatives and their relationship to supervision.

As regards the title of this paper, Is instructional supervision being usurped by coaches or abdicated by principals? Supervision is not being usurped by coaches in the sense that they have purposefully intended to assume supervisory duties, traditionally relegated to trained principals and their assistants. Given the structure and nature of reform efforts in NYC, coaches play a significant role in instructional supervision. However, without vested authority and little or no training in supervision, coaches may have little impact on altering teacher behavior that supports quality teaching needed to promote student achievement. In a similar vein one can argue that principals haven't intentionally abdicated their instructional supervisory function as much as have been overwhelmed by the enormity of the reform measures and constant struggle to keep "head above the water," as one principal admitted. In another sense, however, principals have abdicated their responsibility by complying so readily with reform measures, many of which make little instructional sense. We may look back at these reform initiatives, as Kohn (2004) suggests and lament our complicity. He says:

I am convinced that historians will look back at our era of ever-higher standards and increasingly standardized instruction as a dark period in American education. What were we thinking, they will ask, shaking their heads, when we begrudged children the right to spend their days in a place that provides deep satisfactions and occasional giggles? How did we allow this to happen? . . . Why are our schools not places of joy? Because too many of us respond to outrageous edicts by saying, "Fine." (p. 36)

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