Manuscript 1063

The Effect of Walkthrough Observations on Teacher Perspectives in Christian Schools

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The Effect of Walkthrough Observations on Teacher
Perspectives in Christian Schools

From the practical experience of multiple Christian school administrators over many

years a perpetual phenomenon has surfaced: teachers do not enjoy supervisory observations of

their teaching in classrooms. Their dislike, and even fear, of such classroom visits may emanate

from several apprehensions including (a) lack of trust in administrators' motives, (b) uncertainty

regarding administrators' real evaluations of their teaching performances, or (c) fear that personal

performance weaknesses will manifest themselves during the observations.

Because of these teacher perceptions, the observation of classroom teaching by

supervisors too often degenerates into an unpleasant or unproductive activity for both teachers

and administrators. Teachers sigh with relief when the observations are completed and eagerly

return to their comfort zones, unable to profit substantially from data collected by observers and

shared later in supportive conferences. Administrators, on the other hand, sigh with

discouragement because observations, so difficult to schedule, result in unproductive supervisory

activity that fails to provoke improvements in classroom instruction and, by extension, student

learning.

In an effort to explore remedies for these conditions, we focused this Christian school

study around two questions: (a) Would frequent, informal classroom observations by supervisors

strengthen the effectiveness of administrators' instructional leadership in schools? and (b) would

those same observations stimulate teachers' reflective practice and increase dialogue among

teachers and administrators? Because teacher perceptions were pivotal elements in both

questions, they formed the basis of data collection in participating schools.

Review of Literature and Research

The foundation for student learning is a school culture (composite of administrator, teacher, parent, and student beliefs and values) committed to perspectives that relate positively to student achievement. This has been identified by decades of research. Examples of these perspectives are (a) a vision and goals focused on high levels of student learning, (b) high expectations for student learning, (c) the expectation of continuous improvement, (d) regular discussion of instructional issues, (e) frequent classroom observation and feedback to teachers, (f) support of risk taking – trying new ideas, and (g) collaborative planning of instruction (Cotton, 2003; Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004).

A focal responsibility of school administrators is to lead in establishing such a culture, or collection of values, among teachers. Over time, practitioners, theorists, and researchers have sought to clarify which activities of school leaders do, in reality, contribute to creating such school cultures. In recent years, the practice of *walkthrough observations* has risen to prominence as a promising strategy for promoting a school culture which supports high student achievement.

Historically, the modern versions of walkthrough observations are rooted in management literature. In particular, the theory of "management by walking around," popularized by Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman in the 1980s, provided a springboard for adaptation of the practice in schools. Peters' and Waterman's research revealed that successful executives did not remain cloistered in offices, but stayed in close contact with their companies' operating core personnel. Building on this model, educators have added data gathering and reflective dialogue to the

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walkthrough process in ways that go beyond required formal classroom observations (Schomburg, 2006).

One of the approaches (known as *learning walks*) to such observations involves aggregating data by grade levels, departments, schools, or programs, rather than focusing on individual teachers. Various organizations and consultants, such as Lauren Resnick and Doug Reeves, promote the implementation of this strategy by school districts (Bloom, 2007).

Related to this observation and data collection program is the web-based system used at a high school in Kentucky that reported 1,393 walk-throughs were conducted during the 2006-07 school year, about 30 per teacher. Fifty-five percent of faculty reported they liked being observed, 45% reported neutral feelings, and none objected to the routine observations. Eighty-one percent of the teachers were able to give an example of how walk-through observations had improved their teaching. In addition, administrators reported that knowing what was happening instructionally in all of the classrooms reduced the number of conferences with concerned parents (Granada & Vriesenga, 2008).

Another approach, developed by Carolyn Downey (2004), focuses on three-minute classroom observations designed to develop self-reflective teachers who regularly monitor their own pedagogical improvements.

Other versions of walkthrough observations promote similar purposes, either program evaluation or teacher improvement. While implemented under different monikers such as *data walks*, *peer coaching*, *principal professional learning walks*, or *quick visits*, these techniques aim to generate instructional program improvements through short, informal observations rather than traditional, full-class visits (Bloom, 2007).

What kinds of data are collected during walkthrough observations? Downey's (2004) process called for observation of student engagement, objectives pursued, and teaching methods employed. Resnick's procedure focused on student work and conversations with students in which they describe what they are learning (Abrutyn, 2006). Marshall (2009) advocated features of Downey's plan, calling for observation of classroom safety, objectives, teaching methods, student engagement, and formative, on-the-spot assessments. Each of these aimed to capture data about phenomena which research has shown are related to student learning.

Regardless of the particular logistics for walkthrough observations, trust relationships have been crucial to the effectiveness of such observations. Cudiero and Nelson (2009) reported, "The success of any learning walk depends on how well the instructional leadership team of the school organizes and prepares the school community for the process. In order for a staff to fully benefit from the feedback after a learning walk, trust must be built by making the process transparent" (p. 19). They further noted that "schools and districts engaged in this process report that it has helped them change the culture of their schools from one of distrust and isolation to one of collaboration and openness" (p. 21).

When walkthroughs are conducted properly and trust relationships built, the entire process results in positive outcomes characteristic of effective schools. Among other things, these outcomes include a culture of collegiality among staff, reflective discussions about teacher practice, a focus on student achievement, increased student engagement in the learning process, and a strong desire by staff to find out what works in classrooms (Abrutyn, 2006). In addition, Ginsberg and Murphy (2002) reported additional benefits of implementing a daily schedule of short, unscheduled walkthroughs, including the following: (a) administrators' position as instructional leaders was strengthened because they became more familiar with the school's

curriculum and teachers' practices; (b) administrators were able to gauge the climate of the school; and (c) a team atmosphere developed between teachers and administrators.

Furthermore, additional positive outcomes involving both teacher and administrator perceptions were reported by Rossi (2007), including (a) teacher sharing of best practices, (b) increased principal awareness of what is happening in classrooms, (c) better principal understanding of curriculum gaps and inconsistencies, (d) improved quality of conversations about instruction, and (e) improved quality of student work.

However, negative outcomes can also accompany walkthroughs. Valli and Buese (2007) observed that teacher anxiety increased in a four-year study of 150 teachers in a district that instituted walkthroughs. When trust was low, the walkthroughs were perceived as compliance checks which increased distrust and tension. In another district, urban in nature, more than 50% of the principals believed that district staff members conducting walkthroughs were passing judgment on them (Supovitz & Weathers, 2004).

To summarize, previous research on school culture, teacher and administrator perceptions, and the dynamics of walkthrough observations provided the foundation for this study. The starting point was the relationship of collective teacher and administrator beliefs (school culture) to student learning. Upon this base, we placed the philosophy and practice of walkthrough observations as a means to improve student learning indirectly by directly contributing to the formation of a positive school culture. Figure 1 depicts the relationships of these elements. Despite potential difficulties, walkthrough observations conducted within an environment of trust promised to enhance schools' capacities to become learning communities.

Figure 1. Relationship of the study's conceptual elements
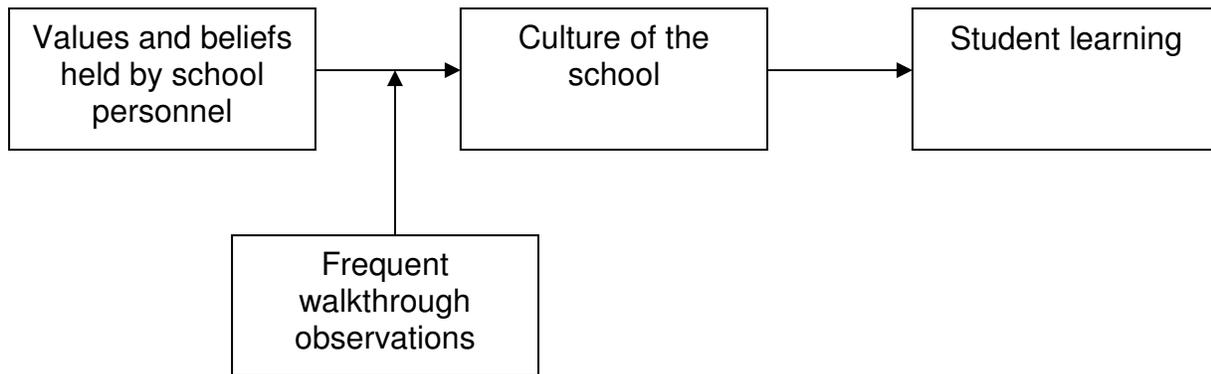
Method

The plan for the study employed a pre-experimental, one-group, pretest-posttest design. First, teachers in selected Christian schools described their perceptions and values on a Likert-scale response pattern survey. Following this, each school administrator or designated supervisor conducted brief, informal, unannounced walkthrough (or drop-in) observations each week for each teacher for a period of four months. Finally, the same teachers described their perceptions and values four months later on the same, originally-administered survey. In addition, principals contributed their qualitative perceptions regarding the process of walkthrough observations. Finally, tests for significance revealed some changes in teachers' perceptions and values over the four-month time period.

Instrumentation. To begin the study, we first developed an instrument designed to measure important aspects of teacher attitudes and perceptions related to student learning. Drawing on the work of Cotton (2003) and Zmuda, Kuklis, and Kline (2004), we constructed a list of 13 statements (see Table 1) describing attitudes and beliefs characteristic of teachers in school cultures that support good student learning. Teachers responded using a five-point Likert

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scale (5-*strongly agree,* 4-*agree more than disagree,* 3-*neither agree nor disagree,* 2-*disagree more than agree,* 1-*strongly disagree*) to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

Table 1. Statements of Teacher Beliefs and Attitudes

1. I make written entries in a journal of my <u>reflections</u> on my teaching and student learning.
2. I analyze <u>why</u> students learned or did not learn during specific lessons.
3. I analyze what <u>evidence</u> I have if students learned or not.
4. I consciously analyze reasons for selecting my <u>teaching methods</u>.
5. I consciously analyze reasons for selecting <u>methods to assess student learning</u>.
6. I align my lesson objectives and content with my school's curriculum for my grade or
     subject.
7. I consciously reflect on how I would teach certain lessons differently in the future.
8. I do not hesitate to try new methods or teaching techniques even though I am not 100% sure
     if they will be successful.
9. I am confident that I can figure out a better way to teach a lesson in the future so that students
     will learn better.
10. I am encouraged after my administrator/supervisor observes my class.
11. I am encouraged after my administrator/supervisor provides feedback regarding his/her visit
     to my classroom.
12. I welcome visits to my class by my administrator/supervisor.
13. I believe that visits to my class by my administrator/supervisor make me a better teacher.

Pilot testing of study components. The next stage of the study involved pilot testing of both the instrument and frequent walkthrough observations. From a convenience sample of Christian schools, five administrators agreed to participate in the pilot work. The purpose of this pilot work was to field test the communication documents, the instructions given to

administrators prior to the treatment (frequent, informal walkthrough observations), and the data collection instruments that would be used pre-and post-treatment to measure teacher perceptions. Data collection, in addition to the teacher survey instrument, included requesting demographic information such as the size of the faculty, the longevity of the administrator's tenure, and the frequency of observations both formal and informal. Also administrators and teachers responded to open-response items. For example, the teachers' questionnaire included questions relating to their desire to be observed, their preference for feedback following observations, and their attitudes about the professional concept called reflective practice.

All administrators who participated in the pilot study committed themselves to observe all teachers for at least two to three minutes no less than once a week. Failure to do so did not require removal from the pilot study, but they were asked in the post-experiment survey to self-report to what extent they were able to conduct weekly observations.

As part of the pilot work, supervisors (some schools had more than one) conducted observations for a full semester. During that time, administrators occasionally prepared brief written comments for teachers and gave them to teachers following observations. Administrators also engaged in informal curriculum/instructional dialogue with teachers as frequently as possible, a practice Downey (2004) preferred over the use of written notes in order to discourage establishing teacher dependency on affirmation from such notes after each visit.

The pilot work produced three helpful results. First, both faculty and administrators reported positive gains on the 13 belief and value statements at the end of the semester, offering promise that the intervention of walkthrough observations would have desirable effects. Though the sample size was too small in the pilot study (N=68) to establish significance at .05, all statements on the questionnaire showed at least modest gains when compared to pre-experiment

responses. Second, participants also anecdotally reported positive to very positive attitudes toward frequent informal classroom observations. Third, suggestions for enhancing the study emerged and included the need for more specific training of the administrators prior to beginning the study and the improvement of communication between supervisors and teachers during the semester.

Selection and training of participants for the full study. Following the review of pilot study results, we recruited ten new schools to participate in the full study. As with the pilot study, we employed convenience sampling, using eight Christian schools in the southeast United States and one school each from Texas and Colorado. All participating schools were members of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and were in similar spectrums of age and size.

Following administrators' agreements to participate, they viewed an instructional video prepared at Columbia International University. The instructions (a) specified procedures for conducting informal walkthrough observations of two to three minutes, (b) recommended features of classroom life to observe in two to three minutes, and (c) presented guidelines for follow-up notes for, or conversations with, teachers. The "recommended features of classroom life" directed observers to note teachers' participation in instructional episodes, curriculum content on which lessons focused, students' activities, and general observations about the classroom environment. A fifth area of observation, suggested by Downey (2004), centered on bulletin board content and displays of student work.

Data collection. Once schools were selected and administrators trained, activation of the study itself began at the start of the Fall 2008 semester. In the first step, teachers accessed the pre-experiment survey by way of *SurveyMonkey*, a web-based service which specialized in

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customized surveys and rendered data reports for researchers. Once the semester of walkthrough observations ended, teachers again accessed SurveyMonkey to record their responses to the same 13 statements addressed four months earlier. In order to permit pairing of pre- and post-experiment responses, teachers used self-constructed codes.

In addition to teachers' quantitative responses, administrators provided qualitative, open-responses to four questions:

1. From your perspective, what was the most valuable benefit of conducting frequent, two-minute observations during this past semester?

2. From your perspective, were there any negative effects of frequent, two-minute observations? If so, what were they?

3. From your perspective, how do frequent two-minute observations compare with infrequent full-class observations in enhancing supervisors' ability to develop, encourage, and evaluate teachers?

4. Will you continue conducting weekly, two-minute observations indefinitely? Why or why not?

Analysis methods. To assess changes in perceptions over the four months of walkthrough observations, we employed three statistical operations: (a) the t test for nonindependent (paired) samples applied to each of the 13 survey statements; (b) factor analysis of the 13 survey statements; and (c) a second application of the t test, this time to three factors. To perform these calculations, we entered teacher responses on the pre- and post-experiment surveys into the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program.

The first of these statistical operations was application of the t test for nonindependent (paired) samples to each of the 13 survey statements. This procedure set the stage for

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determining if changes in the mean scores between the two surveys on each of the 13 statements were significant.

The second and third analysis activities focused on discovering if any of the 13 individual statements clustered together in factors. Following the identification of three factors, or groupings, we again applied the t test for paired samples to each of the factors.

<div align="center">Results</div>

Using these analysis steps, we discovered that three of the 13 survey statements evidenced significant positive change in teacher perceptions, as shown in Table 2. First, survey statement number 5, *I consciously analyze reasons for selecting methods to assess student learning,* registered an effect size (Cohen's *d*) of .28, suggesting that walkthrough observations generated a low-to-moderate effect on this perception. A second statement experiencing significant ($p<.05$) change was number 10, *I am encouraged after my administrator/supervisor observes my class.* Its effect size (.31) also suggested that walkthroughs generated a low-to-moderate effect. Finally, statement number 11, *I am encouraged after my administrator/supervisor provides feedback regarding his/her visit to my classroom,* also experienced a statistically significant increase while producing a low-to-moderate effect size of .32.

Table 2. Pre- and Post-Experiment Survey Statistics and Significance

		Mean	N	Standard Deviation	Significance (two-tailed t)	Effect Size (*d*)
1 - I make written entries in a journal of my <u>reflections</u> on my teaching and student learning.	Pre1 Post 1	2.4414 2.2793	111 111	1.18079 1.08855	.288	-.14
2 - I analyze <u>why</u> students learned or did not learn during specific lessons.	Pre2 Post2	4.3333 4.3964	111 111	.77850 .56051	.516	.09
3 - I analyze what <u>evidence</u> I have if students learned or not.	Pre3 Post3	4.2883 4.4144	111 111	.75543 .59496	.123	.18

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4 - I consciously analyze reasons for selecting my <u>teaching methods</u>.	Pre4 Post4	4.1982 4.3063	111 111	.77248 .72354	.295	.14
5 - I consciously analyze reasons for selecting <u>methods to assess student learning</u>.	Pre5 Post5	4.0631 4.2703	111 111	.81217 .68684	.039	.28
6 - I align my lesson objectives and content with my school's curriculum for my grade or subject.	Pre6 Post6	4.5586 4.5586	111 111	.72218 .61326	1.000	0
7 - I consciously reflect on how I would teach certain lessons differently in the future.	Pre7 Post7	4.6216 4.5676	111 111	.52317 .59729	.441	-.1
8 - I do not hesitate to try new methods or teaching techniques even though I am not 100% sure if they will be successful.	Pre8 Post8	4.2252 4.2342	111 111	.75900 .79721	.926	.01
9 - I am confident that I can figure out a better way to teach a lesson in the future so that students will learn better.	Pre9 Post9	4.3964 4.2883	111 111	.62201 .67940	.192	-.17
10 - I am encouraged after my administrator/supervisor observes my class.	Pre10 Post10	3.9640 4.2162	111 111	.85203 .77934	.020	.31
11 - I am encouraged after my administrator/supervisor provides feedback regarding his/her visit to my classroom.	Pre11 Post11	4.2432 4.4685	111 111	.75337 .68517	.022	.32
12 - I welcome visits to my class by my administrator/supervisor.	Pre12 Post12	4.2973 4.3964	111 111	.75792 .75413	.353	.13
13 - I believe that visits to my class by my administrator/supervisor make me a better teacher.	Pre13 Post13	4.2091 4.2091	110 110	.79095 .82502	.1.000	0

The second and third statements above represent perceptions focused on the teacher-administrator trust relationship, which apparently was enhanced during the walkthrough observation program. While previous research suggested that an already-existing trust relationship was a *pre-requisite* to effective walkthrough observations (Valli & Buese, 2007; Supovitz & Weathers, 2004), this study proposed that, in the Christian school environment, teacher-administrator trust can be *enhanced* as a result of walkthrough observations. Further support for this dynamic came from several principals in the study who reported that "teachers seemed to like more frequent visits"; "the feedback from visits seemed to strengthen trusting

relationships between teachers and administrators"; and "teachers enjoyed seeing me in their classrooms."

Three other statements produced positive gains, though the gains were not large enough to qualify for significance at the p<.05 level. They were: (a) *I analyze why students learned or did not learn during specific lessons,* (b) *I do not hesitate to try new methods or teaching techniques even though I am not 100% sure if they will be successful,* and (c) *I welcome visits to my class by my administrator/supervisor.* Effect sizes of these three statements were very low, ranging from .01 to .13. The absence of significant improvement in the perceptions of (a) and (b) may be attributable to one or more factors. For one, teachers may have already been analyzing why students learn or do not learn in specific lessons, or already been willing to try new methods. As a result, teachers did not report appreciable increases in these behaviors. Another factor which may explain the lack of significant change would be the substance, or content, of feedback given by supervisors after observations. Did supervisors specifically encourage teacher analysis of student learning in specific lessons, or did they specifically encourage pedagogical risk-taking in the classroom? If these emphases were absent, or secondary, in feedback, then one would not expect significant teacher growth on these behaviors.

The remaining seven statements produced either no changes or negative changes and low, negligible, or negative effect sizes. In all cases, the changes were not significant at the p<.05 level. These statements were: (a) *I make written entries in a journal of my reflections on my teaching and student learning,* (b) *I analyze what evidence I have if students learned or not*, (c) *I consciously analyze reasons for selecting my teaching methods,* (d) *I align my lesson objectives and content with my school's curriculum for my grade or subject,* (e) *I consciously reflect on how I would teach certain lessons differently in the future,* (f) *I am confident that I can figure out a*

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better way to teach a lesson in the future so that students will learn better, and (g) *I believe that visits to my class by my administrator/supervisor make me a better teacher.* With the exception of statement (a), the absence of significant positive changes could be attributable to the two factors previously stated: (a) teachers may have already been behaving or perceiving at an acceptably high level prior to the walkthrough observations, or (b) supervisors may not have emphasized those behaviors or perceptions in feedback to teachers. The one teacher behavior that was an exception was *I make written entries in a journal of my reflections on my teaching and student learning.* This behavior was being demonstrated by teachers with the *lowest* frequency of all 13 statements prior to the walkthrough treatment. The post-treatment teacher responses indicated an insignificant negative change in this behavior. In this case, we hypothesized that lack of time, energy, and conviction of need for journaling were the greatest contributors to the low frequency with which teachers journaled their reflections on teaching and learning. It is unlikely that these reasons unique to Christian schools. However, the common need in Christian schools for teachers to fill multiple roles and duties, coupled with home, church, and community responsibilities, usually places teacher time at a premium. Under this pressure, *journaling* appears optional to the Christian school teacher.

To further pursue our original research questions (*Would frequent, informal classroom observations by supervisors strengthen the effectiveness of administrators' instructional leadership in schools and would those same observations stimulate teachers' reflective practice and increase dialogue among teachers and administrators?*) we employed an additional analytical tool – factor analysis of the 13 statements. Using principal component analysis as the extraction method, we probed the post-experiment survey data to ascertain if factors (components) related to (a) administrators' instructional leadership, (b) teachers' reflective

practice, and (c) dialogue among teachers and administrators existed. The resulting analysis weakly revealed two possible factors or components, as shown in Table 3 and the Figure 2 scree plot.

Table 3. Clustering of Factored Components

Component One	I analyze what evidence I have if students learned or not. I align my lesson objectives and content with my school's curriculum for my grade or subject. I consciously reflect on how I would teach certain lessons differently in the future. I am encouraged after my administrator/supervisor observes my class. I am encouraged after my administrator/supervisor provides feedback regarding his/her visit to my classroom. I welcome visits to my class by my administrator/supervisor. I believe that visits to my class by my administrator/supervisor make me a better teacher.
Component Two	I make written entries in a journal of my reflections on my teaching and student learning. I consciously analyze reasons for selecting methods to assess student learning.

Figure 2. Scree Plot from Factor Analysis of 13 Statements
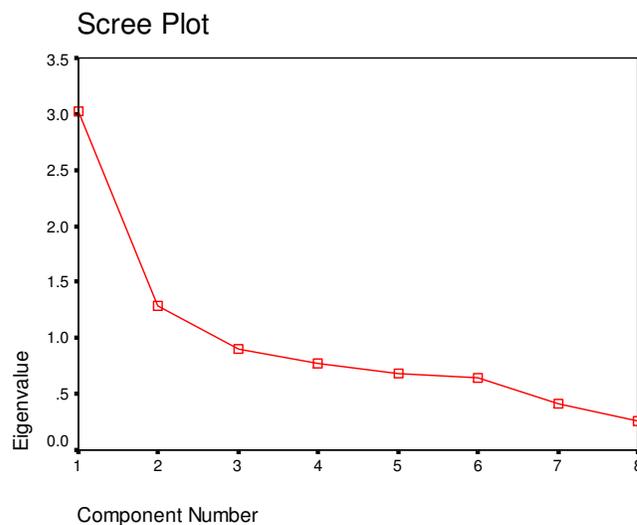
Since there seemed to be no clearly identifiable underlying construct which grouped the statements in components 1 and 2, we dismissed the notion of classifying these statements under common themes.

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However, in a final investigative action, we conducted another factor analysis, this time

on just the statements contained in component 1 from the first factor analysis. The results

showed the possible clustering of statements 10, 11, 12, and 13 (see Table 4).

Table 4. Possible Clustering of Statements from Second Factor Analysis

	Component 1	Component 2
10 - I am encouraged after my administrator/supervisor observes my class.	.844	-.221
11 - I am encouraged after my administrator/supervisor provides feedback regarding his/her visit to my classroom.	.815	-.185
12 - I welcome visits to my class by my administrator/supervisor.	.693	-.217
13 - I believe that visits to my class by my administrator/supervisor make me a better teacher.	.742	-.284

These statements relate to the quality of relationships between supervisors and teachers.

Two of these statements (numbers 10 and 11) individually evidenced statistically significant

increases over the four month span of the walkthrough observation treatment. However, when

we applied the *t* test for paired samples to the pre- and post-experiment scores for the factors

containing statements 10 through 13, the result was not significant at the p<.05 level, though it

was significant at the p<.10 level (.094). Though these findings failed to establish clearly that

factors of statements existed or that they were significant, they did weakly suggest that

relationships between supervisors and teachers may be positively affected as a result of regular,

informal walkthrough observations.

To corroborate, and perhaps explain, our findings, we called upon the qualitative

comments of the nine administrators who participated in the study. These administrators wrote

brief responses to four open-ended questions, understanding that all responses would remain

confidential and no connection would be drawn to their identity and the location of their schools.

The first question was "From your perspective, what was the most valuable benefit of conducting frequent, two-minute observations during this past semester?" All nine respondents reported valuable experiences, especially the opportunity "to be more in-touch with the teachers and students"; "to develop a connection with the classroom"; "to have a better feel of what was going on in class"; and "to have a clearer picture of what is going on in each class." Two observers mentioned being better equipped to assist with classroom management techniques. Two administrators expressed their love of being with the students and teachers and two perceived that the staff enjoyed having them on a regular basis. One stated: "The most valuable benefit of the two minute observations is it forced me out of my office and into the classroom."

The second open-response question was "From your perspective, were there any negative effects of frequent, two-minute observations? If so, what were they?" Only two negative effects were reported: "Some teachers on campus were uncomfortable with this new system and felt like we were spying on them." Related to this perception was the perspective of young teachers: "for new teachers, it seemed to make them nervous and anxious just because they were new to the profession."

Some respondents misunderstood the survey question and included comments about negative *aspects* of the procedures. These comments included: "the pressure of trying to fulfill the requirement of once a week (in every classroom)"; "struggle to mix up my time frames as much as I anticipated I could"; and "I had difficulty dropping in at a good time."

A third open-response question was "From your perspective, how do frequent two-minute observations compare with infrequent full-class observations in enhancing supervisors' ability to develop, encourage, and evaluate teachers?" All nine administrators reported positive aspects of

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this procedure when compared to the procedure for observing teachers for an entire class periods.

Some teachers preferred the two-minute observations for such reasons as:

- [Walkthroughs are] great for discovering classroom management issues prior to the full period observation.
- Teachers appreciated the immediate feedback and encouragement.
- Administrator was able to be better prepared to comment on student behavior in the classroom environment.
- Teachers were more consistent with their lessons since they didn't know when I was coming.
- I am better prepared to complete the summative evaluation at the end of the year.
- This approach will more likely give me an actual reading of what is going on in the classroom.
- I have a better sense of the overall instructional "climate."

In addition, there were three comments about the balance between the traditional clinical observation format and two-minute observation: (a) "I believe full-class observations are more helpful in terms of helping teachers with specific instructional issues"; (b) "I think there is benefit for longer observation times, but I think they should be balanced with shorter times on a regular basis, like the two-minute observation times we did. Using both in combination would give a better view of the teacher's craft"; and (c) "I think they are very effective, coupled with full class observations. Plus, it enhanced my ability to develop, encourage, and evaluate teachers because of the frequency. They were getting more immediate feedback even though it was not as thorough as feedback for a full class observation."

The final open response question posed to administrators was "Will you continue conducting weekly, two-minute observations indefinitely? Why or why not?" All nine administrators indicated they planned to continue conducting weekly, two-minute observations. Their reasons for doing so included: (a) improved communication and better relationships with teachers, (b) the opportunity to stay in touch with positive aspects of the school, (c) the value of

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the approach as a component in the multi-faceted instructional supervision plan, (d) the benefit of frequent contact with students, and (e) teachers' favorable reaction to the process.

What, then, are the relationships of findings to the research questions? With respect to the first research question (Would frequent, informal classroom observations by supervisors strengthen the effectiveness of administrators' instructional leadership in schools?), the findings hint that administrators' instructional leadership may be strengthened as a result of improved relationships with teachers, evidenced by enhanced teacher encouragement following walkthrough observations and feedback. With respect to the second research question (Would those same observations stimulate teachers' reflective practice and increase dialogue among teachers and administrators?), the findings did not offer significant evidence that teachers' reflection on their teaching practices would increase as a result of a walkthrough observation program.

Conclusions and Recommendations

From this study, two conclusions related to supervisory practice in Christian schools are drawn. First, the strength of trust relationships between teachers and supervisors is likely to be enhanced when a program of brief walkthrough classroom observations is practiced. Simply put, the frequency of administrators' visits to classrooms increased teachers' encouragement about their teaching, rather than creating apprehension. "Encouraged" teachers become "trusting" teachers, a condition that promotes improved pedagogy which eventually results in better student learning. Therefore, we recommend that administrators make informal walkthrough observations a scheduled daily activity, visiting each teacher no less frequently than once a week.

A second conclusion emanates from several non-significant findings related to teacher's use of reflective and pedagogical practices known to enhance student learning. The study showed

that the walkthrough observation program had no significant effect on teachers' (a) reflective journaling, (b) analysis of teaching methods, (c) analysis of student learning, and (d) reflection on criteria for their selection of teaching methods. The fact that 35% of Christian school teachers entered teaching from previous careers (Hardman, 2010) may account for the lack of emphasis on these activities. By coming from other careers, such teachers likely experienced less formal teacher education training which would have emphasized these behaviors as aspects of professional behavior. Reflection and analysis are important cognitive processes for teachers to activate when seeking to improve student learning. Therefore, administrators should construct their interactions with teachers following observation episodes so that teachers are prompted to engage these cognitive processes regularly.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

At the core of an administrator's effectiveness is meaningful instructional leadership which necessitates intimate awareness of the teaching/learning activities of his/her school. At the core of effective teaching is meaningful reflection and analysis of the successes and short-comings of daily instructional episodes. These two core principles intersect at a powerful crossroads known as trust—the presence or absence of which creates or loses momentum in the flow of a school. The conclusions of this research suggest that the conducting of frequent and on-going informal observations provide administrators and faculty with a powerful opportunity to build significant levels of trust and to travel together past the point of this intersection for the benefit of individual students and the overall learning community.

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