

## Supervision and Evaluation: Teachers' Perspectives

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### Abstract

*The main goal of this research project is to enlighten teachers' perceptions about supervision and evaluation. Therefore, the study focus dimensions on which supervision and evaluation differ and complement each other, as key functions of school organisation. The results show that teachers realize that supervision and evaluation are separate but complementary functions, requiring complex knowledge and skills, in order to improve teaching performance and promote teacher growth in schools, as learning communities. However, teachers point out the lack of supervisors with a solid training, capable of promoting high-quality teaching and effective professional development. Moreover, they add problems arisen by interpersonal relationship in peer evaluation, advocating external evaluators. Finally, the study demonstrates the imperative of cooperative work between schools and universities.*

**Keywords:** Teacher's supervision; teachers' evaluation; educational community; continuous training.

### 1. Introduction

For most Portuguese teachers, concepts such as teachers' supervision and evaluation are recent acquisitions of the educational glossary. Until the mid-21<sup>st</sup> century, they were circumscribed to initial pedagogical supervision and university researchers. In Portugal, teacher evaluation has become widespread in 2009, so there are few studies about how teachers understand and practise teachers' supervision and evaluation. So, it is of interest to clarify teachers' beliefs and concepts.

Accordingly, in 2010 and 2011, a case study was conducted, applying qualitative methodology. The study intends to analyse the perceptions of elementary and secondary teachers who attend a Master's Degree on Educational Sciences in a University of Porto. The literature review focuses on North America and Portuguese research on supervision and evaluation, although the concepts and practices in this article apply around world.

### 2. Teachers' Supervision and Evaluation

Teachers' supervision and evaluation are essential and complementary functions, although they present distinctive characteristics (Glickman et al., 2008; Nolan & Hoover, 2004; Pawlas & Oliva, 2007). Supervision represents an organizational duty that promotes professional development, perfecting teaching practice and more learning and success for the student. Being of procedural nature, it has its basis on research-action and it configures ecological, cooperative and formative activities. As such, each teacher can exercise supervision duties, regardless of his/her duties in the organizational structure.

In turn, teachers' evaluation is an organizational duty that accomplishes an overall formal assessment of teacher's competence and performance. Evaluation makes sure that each teacher's performance in the system reveals a minimum level of competence, taking into account the student's success. The converging duties of evaluator, specialist and decision-maker are based on national-level criteria, as well as on objectives and targets stated by each school, within its pedagogical autonomy framework. Hence, the evaluator exercises duties of global assessment for each teacher, including class observation. Unlike supervision, the relationship between the evaluator and the evaluated is hierarchical, exercised by teachers appointed for that purpose. Summarising literature review, the main differences are stated in Table 1.

### 3. Methodology

Within the scope of a Master's Degree in Educational Sciences, in 2010, eighteen elementary and secondary school teachers wrote thirty-six reflective texts, describing supervision and evaluation, taking into account their professional experience. Most of the teachers exercise supervision duties, whilst a restricted group also carries out evaluation ones. All respondents are informed and active leaders in their school communities, presenting an identical profile of highly motivated teachers, with more than ten years of school service. Altogether, the respondents indicate, as reason for their return to university, the need for more scientific-pedagogical training, in order to fulfil their duties, following a plan of individual training.

In the investigation it was applied a qualitative methodology of case study (Lichtman, 2013; Punch, 2011). Once the final *corpus* was gathered, the written discourse was analysed, considering categories *a priori* and *a posteriori*, as summarised in Table 1. In addition, other categories were incorporated, related to teachers' critical and prospective positioning regarding the future of supervision and evaluation. The case study focuses on the concepts and categories teachers use to describe supervision and evaluation. Therefore, apart from textual analysis, brief examples of teachers' written discourse will be presented to illustrate teachers' perceptions.

### 4. Teachers' Perceptions on Supervision and Evaluation

Regarding teachers' perceptions on supervision, Table 2 shows the grouping of clipping units, in six categories and corresponding sub-categories, so as to frame the semantic content of written texts, using a semiotic structural approach. In what concerns the "objective of supervision", teachers mention "enabling teachers' professional growth", adding "personal growth" and, residually, "facilitating teachers' evaluation". It is clear the association between supervision and professional growth. Concerning the "goal of supervision", the respondents agree in "improving teachers performance, for more quality in teaching and learning", adding the "student's success".

The identification of the "agent" is consensual. Thus, the supervisor as "facilitator for shared knowledge amongst peers", as specified on Table 1, emerges with values close to "facilitator of interpersonal relationship", in agreement with "promoter of reflection on practices". There is unanimity in the primacy given to the construction of a reflective teacher (Alarcão, 2009; Schön, 1987; 1983; Zeichner, 1993), capable of questioning the practices before, during and after the action, in a research-action process. The perception of the added value of reflexion assumes a critical questioning, through scientific and pedagogical updates in supervision and in different knowledge areas.

However, the supervisor fails in the "interconnection of theoretical-practical expertise", which proves the urgency of an updated training as a prerequisite for the efficiency of supervision (Glickman et al., 2008; 2001).

Teacher's perspective of the overall process of supervision emphasizes cooperative work amongst peers, as well as interpersonal relationships. In the analysis, it also emerges "democratic, open to constructive dialogue" and being "available to listen and clarify". Teachers value an atmosphere of trust and mutual responsibility, meeting studies that present a democratic supervision, due to negotiation, regulation and shared expertise between the supervisor and the teacher, three important characteristics of collegial relationship and professional growth (Nolan & Hoover, 2004; Stones, 1984; Vieira, 2009). Nevertheless, teachers do not see supervision as focused, which proves the distance between theory and practice. Given that, until a few years ago, supervision was a concept unknown at Portuguese schools, allocated to initial supervision and preservice teachers, its implementation is still seen by teachers in a generalist nature, not focused in solving educational problems of the educational community (Moreira & Vieira, 2011; Sullivan & Glanz, 2004). Accordingly, teachers describe supervision as "formative", "self and hetero-regulated amongst peers", capable of promoting ecological transitions.

When it comes to the "nature of supervision", teachers visualise a system that is procedural and reflective, converging in "shared and cooperative" activities, as previously analysed, and configuring an "ecological and socio-constructivist" supervision.

In summary, teachers' writing reveal a multi-layered, reflective, cooperative and democratic supervision, aimed at enhancing professional development and improvement in students' learning:

“The supervisor, in a constructivist perspective, should gather experience, reflection, research and training in a strategic vision. To talk about supervision, in a lifelong training context, implies rethinking the concepts and practices that develop the cooperative work, reflectivity, autonomy and research-action.” Teacher 5

“A new perspective emerges: teachers must stop working alone and start working in a cooperative manner with other teachers.” Teacher 6

“A reflexive teacher is someone who is capable of sharing, innovating and changing his own beliefs and practices, facilitating changing and innovation of other teachers and the school itself, as a learning organisation.” Teacher 14

“In supervision, reflexion spurs a new form of seeing and being. Until not long ago, teachers worked only for their students and classes. Today, they work together as a teachers’ group and as a learning community. (...) It is still a practice of some groups and schools, it was a bit “shaken” by the teachers’ evaluation but, in time, it will certainly be a widespread practice.” Teacher 16

For a comparative analysis between teachers’ perceptions about supervision and evaluation, categories were then applied on teachers’ perceptions on evaluation. The results are stated in Table 3.

The perceptions on teachers’ formal evaluation are diverse, compared to those about supervision. Regarding the first category, teachers underline the importance of “evaluating the teaching quality of each teacher” and “enabling progression in the teaching career”, and with a low expression, “assessing a minimum competence of the teachers’ performance”. It is clear the awareness to a teachers’ evaluation that influences the progression in the teaching career.

When it comes to the “goal of the evaluation” category, the similar percentages of “evaluating the teachers’ performance, taking into account success targets”, “evaluating teaching-learning competences and strategies” and “evaluating practices in class” demonstrate a global and comprehensive vision, encompassing dimensions, competences, strategies and targets.

Regarding the “agent of the evaluation”, it is described a teacher “of the same area of the evaluated teacher”. The respondents take back a controversy that emerged at the time of the first class observations in 2008-2009, when this pre-requisite did not exist and the evaluated teachers contested evaluators from different content areas. Teacher supervision relies on content shared knowledge amongst peers (Table 2), so its importance is clear in expressed or implied negative attitudes of teachers towards evaluators who lack expertise in content areas (Nolan & Hoover, 2004; Pawlas & Oliva, 2007).

Therefore, the evaluator profile, as characterised by the respondents, includes, as distinctive features, being a “decision-maker” and a “specialist” in Didactics, Pedagogy and Supervision. It is clear that the evaluator, being a decision-maker, is not seen as a specialist by most of the respondents, which explains some problems concerning teachers’ evaluation. It is a fact that the evaluators training has been scarce in the last few years, with the exception of some seminars, actions, Master’s and Doctoral Degrees, usually at the trainee’s own expense.

The interpersonal relationship between the evaluator and the evaluated is generally defined as “hierarchical”, either by the “School Headmaster” or the “appointed evaluator”. However, it was “hindered by the attainment amongst peers” in the two first cycles of evaluation, concluded in 2009 and 2011. Teachers define evaluation as a “global assessment” conveyed in a “final qualitative and quantitative assessment”, reinforcing the importance of an “assessment with influence on the teaching career”.

The nature of evaluation is reaffirmed in “Final, including different dimensions”, due to the need of achieving a conclusive assessment “of product” at the end of an evaluation cycle. Many respondents state their belief in “class observation as an essential part of evaluation”, whilst a minority assures that such observation should be optional for the evaluated teacher.

In summary, teachers characterise a teacher performance evaluation which is determinant for high-quality professional development and progression in the teaching career. The constraints are noted especially in the evaluation amongst peers and in the supervisor’s profile.

“Teacher’s evaluation crosses supervision and evaluation. When I was appointed as evaluator I was distressed as I wasn’t prepared to exercise my duties. In this aspect, the Master’s degree helped me in getting to know authors, perspectives and supervision and evaluation strategies, which I am now putting into practice with the teachers I am to evaluate.” (Teacher 9)

“Teacher’s performance evaluation is a complex task, which has highly contributed to the uncomfortable climate that is nowadays present in schools. The conflicts arise because the evaluator and the evaluated work side by side, having the same training and the same knowledge. As such, it is difficult for the evaluated to accept the critical comments and the evaluation made by the evaluator (...) Therefore, when I was appointed as evaluator I made the decision of returning to university, to learn what is needed about my duties.” (Teacher 13)

“At first, I was really upset for being appointed evaluator, since I feared problems. Today, I believe it was an opportunity to learn and update myself as I got back to University, twenty-two years after I had finished my Bachelor’s Degree. I have learnt a lot and completely changed my perspective on teaching, supervision and evaluation.” (Teacher 17)

Teachers’ written discourse show effective ecological transitions, with conceptual and practice changes, and the impact of attending a Master’s Degree on Educational Sciences. Furthermore, it proves the influence of continuous long-life training and the importance of collaborative work between schools and universities.

### ***5. Teacher’s Perceptions about the future of Supervision and Evaluation***

Teachers’ reflections and suggestions, regarding the future of supervision and evaluation, provided the analysis presented in Table 4. Once again, it stands out the importance of reflection and cooperative and shared activities among peers, based on research-action projects (Table 2). Teachers value an “ecological supervision in the educational community” (Table 4), which actually does not prevail in schools, as revealed by the results presented on Table 2. In what concerns teachers’ evaluation, the distance between theory and school practices increases. Firstly, teachers react to the many problems caused by evaluation amongst peers, including interpersonal ones. So, they propose an “evaluation by external teachers”, avoiding internal teachers from their own community. Following this premise, the evaluation should be done by “Higher Education specialists” and by “teachers with a Master’s or Doctoral Degree”. Secondly, teachers suggest the “simplification of the evaluation process” and “classroom observations procedures”, as well as the “independence of teacher’s evaluation from students’ success goals”. Furthermore, some teachers ask for “more incentives to Master’s and Doctoral degrees” at a financial level as well as in terms of career progression.

As the teachers wrote:

“If a teacher, after a work day, still goes to Master’s degree classes in a University, doing his research project during the weekends, nights and holidays, then some incentives should be created, such as a discount in the Masters’ tuition and perhaps a faster progression in the teaching career.” (Teacher 17)

“In supervision it must be developed a cooperative and sharing work, creating a critical spirit that fosters the reflexion on practices. One learns by doing and reflecting before, during and after the action, in a joint process of sharing amongst peers, transforming the practices (...) and at the same time developing a collective attitude.” (Teacher 12)

“Although different, supervision and evaluation are complementary and can be used together to reinforce teachers’ cooperative work and allow for educational development (...). In the future, I think evaluation requires more training for the evaluators, who must be external and never from the same school (...) and the simplification of the evaluation process, especially in the final report, which overburdens all teachers.” (Teacher 2)

In these textual excerpts, the complementarity of teachers’ supervision and evaluation is described as a joint work in the educational community, starting by the clarification of concepts and practices, in a perspective of reflective training. Thus, teachers strongly express the urgency of more continuous training based in a university-school partnership, through the fulfilment of Master’s and/or Doctoral degrees’ research projects.

## 6. Conclusions

This study is restricted to a specific group of teachers, not possible to generalise except in similar contexts, given the characteristics of the case-study (Stake, 2000). Those teachers who participated in this research have an analogue profile of supervisors and evaluators, highly motivated to attain a Master's Degree in Educational Sciences. Their return to university is due to the urgency of acquiring new expertise and competences, seen as indispensable to their new school duties as supervisors and evaluators. Overall, teachers consider that teachers' supervision and evaluation have distinct but complementary functions in educational communities. Thus, they agree that supervision allows for professional growth, improving the teachers' performance and the quality of teaching-learning practices. They consider that the supervisor should promote reflection on practices, among peers and in the educational community, so as to promote a socio-constructivist process of professional development. In turn, teachers' performance evaluation is seen as globalising, producing a professional judgement concerning teachers' overall performance and competence. In a prospective observation, teachers reaffirm the relevance of supervision amongst peers, transversal to every education cycle, based on reflection and on research-action projects. As for evaluation, they consider essential a change in the evaluator's profile, from internal to external to the school, with a solid training in content areas, preferably with a Master's or Doctoral Degree.

Accordingly, teachers advocate more university-school training, taking advantage of decades of Higher Education experience in initial pedagogical supervision. In this desired praxeological partnership underlies a transformative perspective of continuous adult learning (Moreira & Vieira, 2011; Pawlas & Oliva, 2007). Thus, it would be possible to have more quality in education, more professional growth for teachers and more educational and personal success for students, in a reflective school built by reflective teachers (Sullivan & Glanz, 2004; Zeichner, 1993), in a learning community.

Nowadays, School goes through moments of change and transformation. As such, more studies are needed about the crossroads of teachers' supervision and evaluation. It is essential to take into account heterogeneous contexts of some teachers-researchers who invest in specialised training, Master's or Doctoral Degree, as in this study's specific case, and of many other teachers who maintain as their nuclear reference their Bachelor's Degree, concluded years ago. It is in the convergence of this teachers' diversity that the present and the future of teachers' supervision and evaluation are at stake, uniting Schools and Universities in the same unique task of improving the quality of education.

## 7. References

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**Table 1 – Teachers’ Supervision and Evaluation**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Teachers’ Supervision</b>	<b>Teachers’ Evaluation</b>
Objective	To enable professional development in teaching.	To grant a minimum competence in the teachers’ performance.
Goals	To improve teaching development, taking into account the student’s teaching, learning and success.	To evaluate teachers’ performance, taking into account the student’s success.
Agent	Supervisor, as facilitator of shared knowledge and training.	Evaluator, as specialist and decision-maker.
Interpersonal Relationship	Collegiate, each teacher can exercise duties of supervision amongst peers.	Hierarchical, by the school headmaster and the evaluators appointed administratively.
Perspective	Formative, focused	Evaluative, global assessment
Nature	A process	A product

**Table 2 – Teachers’ Perceptions on Supervision**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>	<b>%</b>
1. Objective of Supervision	Enabling teachers’ professional growth	100,00
	Enabling personal growth	27,78
	Facilitating teachers’ evaluation	5,56
2. Goal of Supervision	Improving teachers’ performance, for more quality in teaching and learning.	94,44
	Improving teachers’ performance, for more students’ success.	44,44
	Improving teachers’ performance, for more quality in education	5,56
3. Agent of Supervision	Supervisor, promoter of reflection on practices	100,00
	Supervisor, promoter of shared knowledge amongst peers	55,56
	Supervisor, facilitator of interpersonal relationships	50,00
	Supervisor, promoter of the interconnection between theoretical-practical knowledge	5,56
4. Interpersonal relationship in Supervision	Among peers, in the educational community	88,89
	Democratic, open to constructive dialogue	27,78
	Availability to listen and clarify	16,67
	Made difficult due to formal evaluation	11,11
5. Perspective in Supervision	Formative	100,00
	Auto and hetero-regulated among peers	55,56
	Focused	0,00
6. Nature of the Supervision	Procedural	88,89
	Reflective on practices	72,22
	Shared and cooperative	55,56
	Based on research-action	50,00
	Ecological and socio-constructivist	16,67

**Table 3 – Teachers' Perceptions on Evaluation**

Categories	Sub-categories	%
1. Objective of Evaluation	Evaluating the teaching quality	88,89
	Enabling progression in the teaching career	72,22
	Assessing a minimum competence of the teachers' performance	5,56
2. Goal of the Evaluation	Evaluating the teachers' performance, taking into account success targets	55,56
	Evaluating teaching-learning competences and strategies	
	Evaluating practices in class	50,00
3. Agent of the Evaluation	Evaluator, a teacher of the same content area of the evaluated teacher	77,77
	Evaluator as a decision-maker	72,22
	Evaluator as a specialist in Didactics and Pedagogy	22,22
4. Interpersonal Relationship in Evaluation	Evaluator as a specialist in supervision	22,22
	Hierarchical, by the School Headmaster	88,89
	Hierarchical, by the appointed evaluator	88,89
5. Perspective in Evaluation	Hindered by the attainment amongst peers	72,22
	Global assessment	94,44
	Final qualitative and quantitative assessment	72,22
6. Nature of the Evaluation	Final assessment with influence on the teaching career	72,22
	Final, of product	88,89
	Final, including different dimensions	72,22
	Class observation as an essential part of evaluation	66,66
	Class observation as an optional part of evaluation	22,22

**Table 4– Teacher's Prospective Perceptions of Supervision and Evaluation**

Categories	Sub-categories	%
1. Supervision	More reflection on the practices	94,44
	Shared supervision, amongst peers	88,89
	Cooperative practices among teachers	77,77
	Supervision based on research-action projects	72,22
	Ecological supervision in the educational community	50,00
2. Teachers' Evaluation	Evaluation by external teachers	88,89
	Evaluation by higher education specialists	66,66
	Evaluation by teachers with a Master's or Doctoral Degree	55,56
	Complementarity of teachers' supervision and evaluation	50,00
	Simplification of the evaluation process	38,88
	Simplification of classroom observations procedures	27,78
3. Training	Independence of teachers' evaluation from students' success goals	16,67
	More continuous training	94,44
	More university-school training	77,77
	More incentives to Master's and Doctoral degrees	22,22