

A Brief Discussion on the Enhancement of Primary and Secondary School Principals' Leadership from the Perspective of Term-based Supervision

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Abstract: Enhancing the leadership of primary and secondary school principals is an important part of the educational supervision guarantee system. The comprehensive supervision and evaluation at the end of a principal's term is an institutional design within China's national education supervision framework to ensure school education quality. Western countries, represented by the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, attach great importance to the role of educational supervision in guaranteeing the development of principals' leadership, and their related models and methods offer valuable references. Currently, to advance the comprehensive supervision and evaluation at the end of principals' terms, it is necessary to explore the construction of an evaluation paradigm aimed at enhancing principals' leadership, adhere to value guidance to strengthen the directing role of educational supervision and evaluation, and enhance the application of supervision results to ensure educational supervision "has teeth". This approach aims to supervise and guide principals in continuously improving their leadership, thereby fostering a positive ecology for cultivating school leadership and governance.

Keywords: Supervision Reform, Term, Comprehensive Supervision, Principal Leadership.

1. Introduction: The Institutional Design of Term-based Supervision and Evaluation for Primary and Secondary School Principals

Educational supervision is a fundamental educational system stipulated by the Education Law and an important component of China's modern educational governance system. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the educational supervision system has continuously evolved and developed, gradually becoming more standardized and institutionalized, achieving breakthroughs in mechanisms, legal basis, inspector teams, and supervisory practices. Particularly after the promulgation of the "Education Supervision Regulations" in 2012, key long-standing issues were resolved legally, the authority of educational supervision institutions was clarified in implementation norms, educational supervision was categorized into comprehensive supervision, specialized supervision, and routine supervision, and strict supervision and evaluation procedures were established.

The Opinions of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council on Deepening the Reform of the Educational Supervision System and Mechanism in the New Era point out: "Improve policies and standards for school supervision, conduct regular supervision of schools, guide schools to develop distinctive features and levels, and promote the comprehensive development of students' moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education. Focus on supervising the implementation of fostering virtue through education in schools, mainly including Party building in schools and Party building leading the construction of the Youth League and Young Pioneers, education and teaching, scientific research, professional ethics and conduct of teachers, resource allocation, education fees, safety and stability, etc. Guide schools to establish self-supervision systems and optimize

internal school governance. Improve the system of responsibility zones for educational inspectors, implement routine supervision, and urge schools to standardize their operations. In principle, school principals (kindergarten directors) should undergo a comprehensive supervision at the end of their term." On December 27, 2021, the Office of the State Council's Education Supervision Commission issued the "Opinions on the Comprehensive Supervision and Evaluation Work for Primary and Secondary School and Kindergarten Principals (Directors) at the End of Their Term" (hereinafter referred to as the "Opinions"), systematically deploying the comprehensive supervision and evaluation work for principals (directors) at the end of their term. The "Opinions" emphasize that through comprehensive supervision, the responsibilities and mission commitment of primary and secondary school principals are strengthened, their vitality in school management is stimulated, the management level of primary and secondary schools is enhanced, schools are effectively urged to standardize their operations, and the quality of education and school management are continuously improved, striving to provide fair and quality education for every child. The "Opinions" clarify the basic principles for conducting the comprehensive supervision and evaluation: adhering to the correct orientation, strengthening overall coordination, reflecting adaptation to local conditions, and innovating methods. It also states that based on comprehensive consideration of factors like geographical distribution, development level, and work foundation, some provinces will be selected to pilot the comprehensive supervision and evaluation work, summarizing experience to explore pathways for nationwide implementation. The pilot work started in 2022. Based on the pilot experience, it will be rolled out nationwide in due course.

Educational supervision acts as a baton, possessing both a "supervisory" function and a "guiding" role, serving as an important measure, means, and "guardian" for ensuring high-quality education development. Currently, how to conduct the

pilot program for term-based supervision and evaluation of primary and secondary school principals is a hot and difficult issue in educational supervision. Searches in literature databases like CNKI reveal that a large number of studies are based on research on supervising and evaluating principal leadership, mostly interpreting foreign models, while empirical research on term-based supervision and evaluation of principals in China is relatively insufficient, and the dialogue between theory and practice is somewhat lacking. Therefore, based on the "Opinions" issued by the Office of the State Council's Education Supervision Commission, this study compares and draws lessons from international experience in supervising and evaluating primary and secondary school principals' leadership, synthesizes relevant research literature and practical cases on supervising and evaluating principal leadership, and strives to explore and construct a supervision and evaluation model from the perspective of term-based supervision. It also attempts to address the value promotion logic of supervising and evaluating principal leadership and strengthening the application of supervision results to ensure educational supervision "has teeth".

2. Lessons from Abroad: International Experience in Supervising and Evaluating Primary and Secondary School Principals' Leadership

Major Western countries emphasize the significant impact of educational supervision and evaluation on high-quality education development. Their supervisory and guiding roles encompass considerations and visions of educational supervision administrative departments for strengthening principal leadership and improving school governance. So, how should the leadership of principals, as key figures in school development and the educational process, be evaluated? Different countries have different understandings and practices regarding this.

Experience from the UK. The formation of the UK's supervision and evaluation system has roughly gone through three periods: formation, improvement, and reform. To meet practical needs and changes in school reform and development, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) continuously revises the "School Inspection Framework" and implements large-scale school inspection plans. UK school inspections primarily evaluate three types of effectiveness: students' learning effectiveness and core competencies, the educational effectiveness of the school (teachers and classrooms), and the leadership and management effectiveness of the school principal. With continuous system improvement, UK educational supervision places great importance on the legal construction of educational supervision. Supervision work is carried out by specialized agencies with regular training, and the supervisory role of inspection departments over principals and the evaluation system have gradually become standardized, standardized, and scientific. The content of educational supervision and evaluation is also rich, including school management, student learning quality, students' social adaptability, and the principal's ability to lead teachers in fully utilizing school resources to improve teaching quality. Educational supervision work exhibits characteristics such as focusing on school quality and performance under the principal's leadership, school operation mechanisms, school

improvement capacity, and accountability systems. Based on principal leadership and school quality, the UK has established a system where the frequency of school inspections is determined based on inspection results and risk assessment. While improving inspection efficiency and exempting some schools from inspection, Ofsted presets a risk assessment stage to strengthen supervision of exempted schools, preventing them from inaction or slackness in education and teaching under the halo of exemption. This also allows Ofsted to allocate supervision resources reasonably. The quality assurance of primary and secondary education in the UK is supported by professional education laws, open and transparent inspection processes, and using supervision to promote improvement, forming the basic guarantee for the UK's educational supervision and evaluation system to monitor education and teaching quality in schools [1].

Experience from the USA. Research on models for evaluating US principals' instructional leadership originated from the 1966 Coleman Report and the American demand for principals to play an important role in the school education process. Looking at the development history of evaluating principals' instructional leadership in the US, three influential evaluation models have emerged: the model developed by Bossert et al. in 1982, the model developed by Hallinger et al. in 1985, and the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) model. These three models have their uniqueness but also share relationships of inheritance and development. Among them, Bossert et al. revealed the close influential relationship between principals' instructional leadership behaviors and the learning environment, teaching organization, and student learning, reflecting that personal characteristics, teaching context, and group characteristics represent the context in which principal instructional leadership is implemented, and how principal instructional leadership behaviors shape the learning environment and teaching organization, thereby affecting student learning. Hallinger et al. believed that the principal's impact on school education effectiveness mainly functions through the principal's instructional leadership. The constructed evaluation model includes three dimensions: defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate. The Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) is an evidence-based, multi-rater (360°) assessment of principals' leadership behaviors. This model proposes six core components: high standards for student learning, rigorous curriculum, quality instruction, culture of learning and professional behavior, connections to external communities, and performance accountability. It also proposes six core processes: planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating, and monitoring, along with 36 behavioral domains under the interaction of core components and processes to define the scope of principal instructional leadership. In summary, a common characteristic of evaluating primary and secondary school principals' leadership in the US is that it is proposed based on practical needs, plays an important role in promoting principals' professional development, and the comprehensive, diverse supervision and evaluation system creates a progressive environment for principals to focus on student learning [2].

Experience from Germany. Germany's developed education system helps improve the overall quality of its citizens, and its unique educational supervision system ensures the quality of German education. Exploring and

organize Germany's educational supervision system holds certain reference significance for improving China's educational supervision system. Educational supervision in Germany runs through the entire work of educational administration, implementing a dual leadership system where leaders responsible for educational administration are also responsible for educational supervision work, with clear division of labor and coordinated cooperation among institutions. The supervision authority of inspectors is divided into three aspects: professional supervision (Fachaufsicht), administrative supervision (Dienstaufsicht), and legal supervision (Rechtaufsicht). Supervision work focuses on school inspectors and emphasizes school evaluation, aiming to improve school teaching quality. The core is professional supervision, meaning the school principal's work is subject to specialized educational supervision, and inspectors are fully qualified and empowered to check the rationality and practicality of decisions and measures taken by the principal. Simultaneously, supervision and evaluation for primary and secondary schools emphasize two-way interaction, making it both authoritative and democratic [3].

3. Promotion Strategies: Optimizing Supervision Guarantees Aimed at Enhancing Principal Leadership

Explore constructing an evaluation paradigm aimed at enhancing principal leadership. Based on the interpretation of relevant policy texts and research literature, and drawing on lessons from educational supervision in the US, UK, Germany, and other countries, this study proposes that the term-based supervision and evaluation of primary and secondary school principals refers to the comprehensive supervision and evaluation they undergo after fulfilling their job responsibilities, mainly including the following four aspects:

(1) School Governance Supervision and Evaluation: Primarily evaluates advancing school management according to law, strengthening standardized operations, improving internal school management systems, formulating school

development vision, implementing standardized operations such as the "double reduction" policy and "five managements", student recruitment and fees, establishing and improving safety risk prevention and control systems, food and drinking water safety, campus safety incidents, and other safety and health issues.

(2) Teaching Management Supervision and Evaluation: Primarily evaluates whether the school's curriculum planning is designed according to national curriculum standards and syllabi combined with local realities, the state of professional ethics and conduct of teachers, teacher title evaluation and appointment, harmony in teacher-student relationships, whether teacher teaching plans meet syllabus requirements, and assesses teachers' teaching levels and student academic levels through classroom observations and evaluations.

(3) Learning Environment Supervision and Evaluation: Primarily evaluates whether the school's campus culture construction aligns with the educational policy of fostering virtue through education and the simultaneous development of the "five educations" (moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, labor), the construction of platforms promoting teacher professional development including teacher training, research activities, collective lesson preparation, and teacher professional learning communities, and the construction of learning environments supporting students including learning resources, teacher-student relationships, and student-student relationships.

(4) Establishment of Educational Supervision Accountability System: Educational supervision departments should, according to the "Education Supervision Regulations" and the "Measures for Educational Supervision Accountability," establish and improve accountability mechanisms and implement supervision accountability work.

Based on this, this study preliminarily constructs a comprehensive supervision and evaluation model for the end of primary and secondary school principals' terms (see figure below), which also needs continuous improvement through comprehensive pilot programs and localized promotion practices.

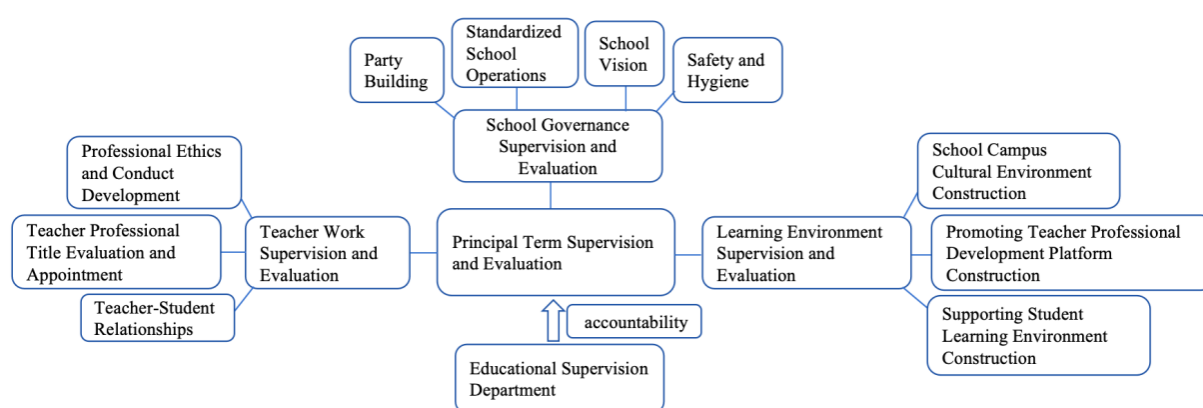


Figure 1. Comprehensive Supervision and Evaluation Model for the End of Primary and Secondary School Principals' Terms

Adhere to value guidance to strengthen the directing role of educational supervision and evaluation. Primary and secondary school principals are practitioners and promoters of educational change. Conducting term-based supervision and evaluation of principals holds significance for guiding the practical value of educational supervision. The issuance of the "Opinions," on one hand, strengthens the seriousness and authority of comprehensive supervision and evaluation work, making principals aware from the moment they assume office that they will undergo comprehensive evaluation at the end of

their term, thereby enhancing their sense of responsibility and mission, putting on a "tight curse" (increased caution/reverence). On the other hand, it clarifies the key points and reference points for comprehensive supervision and evaluation, which are more directional [4]. Localities should optimize the comprehensive supervision and evaluation indicators based on their actual conditions, define the weight of each indicator and the methods for collecting relevant data to facilitate operation and implementation. The term-based supervision and evaluation of principals

essentially tests their microscopic grasp of the "Opinions" and whether they can understand the essence of the document and implement it concretely. The term-based supervision and evaluation of principals needs to be reflected in their practical wisdom, which contains typical experiences and practices of fulfilling duties responsibly, which can be better inherited in future school management practices. A good principal makes a good school. Through term-based supervision and evaluation, principals can be motivated to unleash practical management wisdom, stimulate the creativity and potential of teachers and students, integrate personal values into the school community building, force principals to learn and optimize school governance models, urge principals to fulfill their duties, identify and correct deficiencies in the school's educational work, and use the educational supervision baton to guide the improvement of principal leadership, build a favorable educational ecology, and achieve the value goal of "fostering virtue through education".

Strengthen the application of supervision results to ensure educational supervision "has teeth". Ten supervisions are not equal to one accountability. "Having teeth" is a new requirement put forward by central leadership for educational supervision work and is the fundamental strategy for educational supervision to yield practical results and promote the solution of accumulated problems in the education sector. It is necessary to adhere to "limited supervision, unlimited deterrence," focus on serving the high-quality development of primary and secondary schools and fostering virtue through education, combine problem orientation, goal orientation, and result orientation, tightly grasp the key indicators that prominently affect and constrain the enhancement of principal leadership, strengthen the application of digital technology in educational supervision and evaluation, concentrate efforts on solving hot and difficult problems in school development, and take the preemptive move in educational supervision. For principals identified with

problems during supervision, the sharp sword of educational supervision accountability must be resolutely used. The "teeth" of educational supervision cannot become "false teeth". Problems in the field of school management must be closely monitored repeatedly; where there are problems, educational supervision must extend there. It is necessary to explore detailed and concrete educational supervision accountability systems, establish mechanisms linking the comprehensive supervision results at the end of principals' terms with performance assessments, combining reverse punishment with positive incentives, and using both internal circulation and public exposure for accountability. Dare to "lift the lid" (expose problems), "strike the board" (impose sanctions), conduct real and strict accountability to prevent "institutional idling" (systems not functioning), thereby forming a favorable ecology for cultivating primary and secondary school principals' leadership and governance.

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