

# A Contingency Model for Principal Supervision: Matching Supervisory Style with Teacher Needs

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*The purpose of **supervision** of instruction is to work cooperatively with teachers to improve instruction.* The goal of the supervisor is not simply to help teachers solve immediate problems or is it to rate them, but rather it is to engage with teachers in the study and improvement of teaching and learning. This process is a long-term and continuous one anchored in collaboration, cooperation, and collegueship (DiPaola & Hoy, 2014).

There is no one best way to supervise just as there is no one best way to learn or to teach. Effective supervision is a matter of matching the appropriate style of the supervisor with the needs of the teacher. Supervisory style can be conceptualized in a host of ways, but to keep things manageable, we conceive of four styles of supervision—the director, the educator, the colleague, and the professional. Effective supervisors need to not only know the strengths and weaknesses of their teachers but also how to implement the appropriate strategies to meet specific teacher needs. So how does a supervisor choose the best strategy for a specific teacher. There is no simple answer, but we have formulated a simplified contingency model for principals to engage in such decision making.

Our model has two criteria or questions with respect to teachers. First, how much **expertise** in teaching and learning does the teacher possess? Second, to what extent is the teacher devoted to development and improvement (**commitment**). These two dimensions form four types of teachers if you divide each criterion into high and low; see below.

		Expertise in Teaching and Learning	
		Low	High
Commitment to Development and Improvement	Low	Misfit	Comfortable
	High	Neophyte	Master

Hence, the model depicts four kinds of teachers: **Master teachers** are those you are expert in teaching and learning and strong in their continuous commitment to develop and improve. **Neophytes** are teacher who are committed to developing and improving their teaching and learning skills, but are relatively low in their expertise. Teachers who have little expertise in learning and teaching and are not interested in improving are simply **Misfits** at this stage in their career. Finally, some teachers have strong expertise, but for some reason (e. g. apathy, burnout, satisfaction), they are content with their classroom performance—called **Comfortables**.

Our model postulates that each type of teacher requires a different style of supervision if the process of supervision is to be effective. Thus, next we consider four styles of supervision:

**Director**—the principal gives unilateral direction.

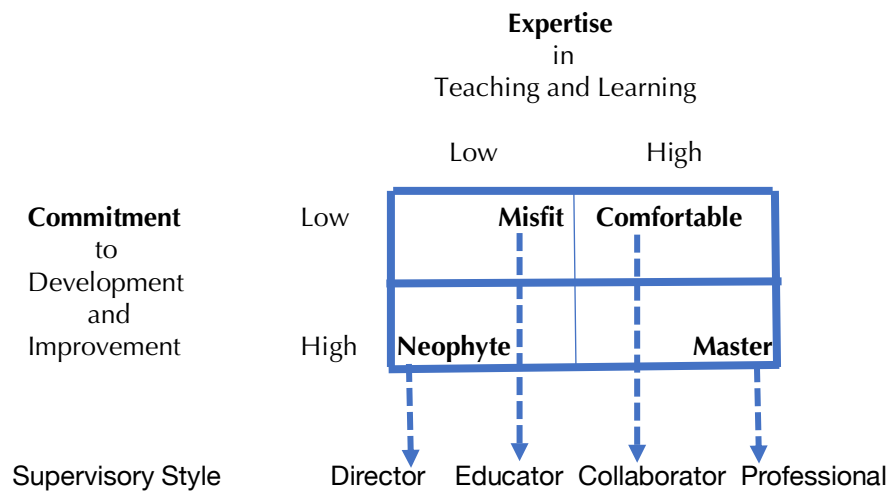
**Educator**—the principal teaches and then guides action.

**Collaborator**—the principal and teachers act as a team to make joint decisions.

**Professional**—the principal empowers teachers to make autonomous decisions.

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### Propositions

1. If the teacher is a **neophyte**, then a **director** who is firm and gives unilateral direction is most effective.
  2. If the teacher is a **misfit**, then an **educator** who teaches and guides is most effective.
  3. If the teacher is a **comfortable**, then a **collaborator** who motivate the teacher and make joint decisions is most effective.
  4. If the teacher is a **master**, then a **professional** principal who empowers these teachers to make autonomous decisions and lead others is most effective.
  5. The principal must be able to match the appropriate supervisory style with teacher needs, and as teacher needs are met, continue to change supervisory style—moving from director to educator to collaborator to professional. (© W. Hoy, 2019)
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In summary, this is a simplified model of supervision for principals that matches the needs of teacher with an effective type of supervision. As shown above, neophytes need direct guidance, whereas teachers with limited expertise and limited commitment (misfits) need a supervisor who can aid both their development of skills and their commitment to teaching, learning, and improvement; they need a principal who has an educator style of supervision. Teachers who are satisfied with their performance and not concerned with improving (comfortables) need a principal-supervisor who will collaborate with them and motivate them to improve. Finally, master teachers are full-fledged professionals who need to work with other professionals to develop new ideas and continue to experiment and improve. They need principals who have a professional style that empowers these teachers to make autonomous decisions and, on occasion, work with other teachers to help them improve instruction and learning.

The model is a dynamic one that deals not only with matching teacher needs with supervisory styles, but also of simultaneously moving supervisory style from director to educator to collaborator to professional. The goal for principals is to interact with teachers as a colleague and professional. The goal for teachers is to become master teachers working conjointly with principal professionals to make teaching and learning in the school exceptional.