Best Practices in Teaching Supervision in General

1. **Supervision appears essential to fostering students knowledge and skills in teaching**
   
   1. Research in higher education and counselor education suggests that supervision provided by an experienced faculty supervisor or mentor enhances doctoral students’ development as teachers (Baltrinic, Jencius, & McGlothlin, 2016). Without supervision of teaching experiences, doctoral students may lose the “opportunity to use the graduate teaching experience as a way to increase skills as a classroom teacher” (Prieto & Scheel, 2008, p. 50).
   2. In counselor education, Hall and Hulse-Killakcy (2010) found that respondents perceived supervision of teaching as more helpful on average than any other teaching preparation experience besides teaching an “entire course from start to finish” and creating a course syllabus (p. 5).
   3. In higher education, Reneau and Reneau (2016) investigated the perceived effectiveness and prevalence of teaching supervision. Junior faculty members affirmed this factor as supporting their teaching preparedness with a mean score of 5.59 out of 7 with 1 indicating the experience was not at all effective, and 7 indicating that the experience seemed very effective. The authors also found supervision of teaching significantly related to junior faculty members’ perceived preparedness to teach. Importantly, for those who did have supervised teaching experiences, supervision was rated as higher than any other experience besides those associated with actual teaching experience (Reneau & Reneau, 2016).
   4. Finally, in a national, cross-sectional study investigating the educational experiences of more than 32,000 doctoral students in 5,000 programs across 400 universities, Fagen and Wells (2004) respondents indicated that supervision of teaching proved an incredibly important experience for their development as teachers and perceived successful transition to the professoriate.

2. **Importance of the supervisory relationship**
   
   1. In a phenomenological study on coteaching relationships (Baltrinic, Jencius, & McGlothlin, 2016), students emphasized the primacy of the faculty-student relationship during times of feedback and indicated a preference for relationships characterized by open communication, warmth, support, trust, and minimization of the hierarchy between the student and faculty member. Furthermore, when students developed a trusting relationship with their supervisor, they reportedly engaged more readily in open communication about their successes as well as their fears, failures, and challenges.
   2. Relatedly, in a Q-study on counselor educators’ teaching mentorship styles, Baltrinic, Moate, Gimenez Hinkle, Jencius, & Taylor (2018) found that many mentors emphasized a preference for treating students as equals, allowing them to express feelings related to their teaching experiences, emphasizing the creation of a safe place for feedback, and on giving strengths-based feedback.

3. **Tailoring experiences and feedback to the developmental needs of the student.**
   
   1. Although both novice and experienced doctoral students report a preference for supervision characterized by support, friendliness, and care (Prieto, Scheel, & Meyers, 2001), different levels of experience are associated with different needs within the supervision context. Therefore, it is suggested that supervisors and mentors should tailor their approach/style of supervision to the doctoral students’ current teaching knowledge,
skill, and experience. For example, doctoral students with less experience reported a preference for concrete feedback on their teaching as well as greater direction and structure in their teaching supervision (e.g., specific readings, role-plays of teaching interventions, or directives). This provides novice teachers crucial support during the “predictable difficulties that all [teaching assistants] (and veteran teachers) inevitably face” (Prieto, 2003, para. 8). Doctoral students who possess greater confidence and skill in teaching, on the other hand, preferred a collegial or consultative approach to teaching supervision (Prieto, 1999). This allows experienced doctoral students to “fine tune their teaching skills and develop a personalized approach to teaching” (Prieto, 2001, p. 115).

2. Orr et al. (2008) also affirmed the importance giving more directive supervision to students just beginning their teaching experiences and then altering one’s supervisory approach as the student acquires more teaching experience.

4. **Ongoing and regular supervision meetings focused on the development of the students’ knowledge and skills in teaching.**

   1. Supervision of teaching should include ongoing, regularly (e.g., weekly) scheduled meetings focused on providing support and feedback regarding how students can improve teaching effectiveness (Prieto & Scheel, 2008; Silverman, 2003, Orr et al., 2008). Orr et al. (2008) found that weekly, structured supervision of CES doctoral students contributed to their perceived confidence and competence in teaching. Suddeath (2018) also found that doctoral students who received weekly supervision of their supervision, as opposed to bi-weekly, monthly, by appointment only, or no supervision, had significantly higher self-efficacy in their teaching. Quality of this supervision was the most influential predictor of increased teaching self-efficacy in this study.

5. **Structuring and establishing clear expectations for supervision sessions (e.g., what’s expected, times you will meet, etc.)**

   1. Researchers in CES recommend providing structure and overtly communicating expectations for the supervision of teaching process (Baltrinic et al., 2016; Hall & Hulse, 2010; Hunt & Gilmore, 2011; Orr et al., 2008). Baltrinic et al. suggest that in coteaching (which assumes a mentor/supervisory relationship as part of the process), providing specific instructions on teaching tasks and delineating roles and responsibilities at the beginning of coteaching was found as most helpful to CES doctoral student experience. Hall & Hulse (2010) found that faculty would have preferred more structured teaching preparation experiences in their doctoral training and especially those that would foster self-reflection on teaching practices (i.e., individual or group supervision). Further, Hunt & Gilmore (2011) found that CES doctoral students preferred structured supervision. Finally, as mentioned previously, Orr et al. (2008) created a specific model of coteaching that included extensive training and preparation. Within the training and preparation students received, they worked directly with an experienced faculty member to develop an entire course. Roles and responsibilities as well as explicit communication of expectations of the CES doctoral student were communicated during supervision of teaching. Orr et al. found that overtly communicating these things allowed students to develop and implement their philosophies of teaching as well as increasing their confidence and competence in teaching.

6. **Other components of ideal supervision supported by research**
1. Supervision should provide opportunities for students’ self-reflection on teaching and development of their teaching philosophies (Orr et al., 2008; Reneau & Reneau, 2016; Wulff et al., 2004). Ideally, faculty supervisors should also share teaching resources with students as this gives them a template for growing in their own practice of teaching (Silverman, 2003; Orr et al., 2008; Reneau & Reneau, 2016). Ideally, supervisors should provide formative and summative assessment and feedback of students’ teaching to determine needs and monitor their growth (Baltrinic et al., 2016; Wulff et al., 2004). Providing feedback, especially characterized by a trusting and supportive supervisory relationship, “contributed to a safe space for participants to learn, acknowledge mistakes, and formulate refined teaching approaches for subsequent teaching endeavors” (Baltrinic et al., 2016, p. 37).
Considerations for Supervision of Teaching for International Students

Challenges

1. Gender and Communication Barriers-Application to Group Supervision and Individual Supervision

A potential source of concern for international students relates to cross-gender interaction and differences in the style of communication within the supervision context. For example, cultural norms, such as the separation of women and men in countries like Saudi Arabia, can lead to difficulties when working in mixed gender groups. Regarding communication style, Americans are typically more open and direct in their dialogue as compared to their international counterparts. Further, some international students may be reluctant to express their own opinions as they may be discouraged to do this in their home countries or they may be used to a more indirect style of communication (using metaphors to express disappointment/corrective feedback). This makes group work difficult for many international students. Learning how navigate these differences and nuances in communication, while also honoring their own beliefs/values/morals can prove challenging for students.

2. Language Barriers

Similarly, international students also experience language barriers. Language is often cited as the greatest barrier for international students/supervisees. This contributes to the uncertainty in various social as well as academic situations. Even for international students who speak English, understanding exactly what is being said or being asked of the student may prove difficult as words and phrases have specific and varying meanings depending on one’s cultural context. For example, references to popular culture icons readily recognized by U.S. students as well as sarcasm, slang, and idioms, which are often taken literally by international students. Thus, clarity in communication, checking for comprehension, speaking slowly, avoiding jargon, and providing multiple examples are important and helpful ways of attempting to bridge this gap.

3. Academic integrity

This relates mostly to to plagiarism and citation. Many live in a “collectivist” society where not sharing answers is going against the cultural norm. “Here we call it cheating; they call it sharing.”

5. Pedagogical/Androgogical and Educational System Differences

Many international students come from a “Teacher Centric”-educational context in which the supervisor and/or instructor is seen as the expert, the authority who has the answers. Because of this, it is culturally taboo to question the supervisor. This creates challenges in the student-supervisor relationship because the student will likely repeat the supervisor’s views rather than expressing their own or providing a critique of others’ interpretations. Further, supervisors may think that the student is not being proactive and taking sufficient ownership of their learning, while the student is respectfully deferring to the supervisor as the knowledgeable specialist.

In addition to the above, many international students experience lecture as the primary method of instruction. Because of this, there is an expectation “that students likely prefer the learning systems to which they are most accustomed” (Andrade, 2006, p. 137). However, although many international students “identified the lecture as the most common mode of instruction in their homelands, their preferred learning approach was direct experience, involving contact with topics and situations related to their studies” (Andrade, 2006, p. 137).
Even the basic structures of education systems differ. Assessment, expectations, roles and responsibilities, etc.

**How to Help**

**1. Developing and Strengthening Multicultural Knowledge, Skill, and Awareness**

Above all it is essential that supervisors increase knowledge, skill, and awareness of their own and their students’ cultural beliefs, values, and practices that influence the supervisory experience. In a study by Woo, Jang, & Malik (2015), counselor education and supervision doctoral students found their supervisors multiculturally incompetent and unhelpful. This must be remedied as our professional organizations’ ethical codes and accreditation bodies mandate counselor educators to develop multicultural competencies.

CACREP 2016 (p. 35)

3.h. ethical and culturally relevant strategies used in counselor preparation

ACA 2014 (pp. 14-15)

F.7.c. Infusing Multicultural Issues/Diversity

Counselor educators infuse material related to multiculturalism/diversity into all courses and workshops for the development of professional counselors.

F.11. Multicultural/Diversity Competence in Counselor Education and Training Programs

F.11.a. Faculty Diversity

Counselor educators are committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty.

F.11.b. Student Diversity

Counselor educators actively attempt to recruit and retain a diverse student body. Counselor educators demonstrate commitment to multicultural/diversity competence by recognizing and valuing the diverse cultures and types of abilities that students bring to the training experience. Counselor educators provide appropriate accommodations that enhance and support diverse student well-being and academic performance.

F.11.c. Multicultural/Diversity Competence

Counselor educators actively infuse multicultural/diversity competency in their training and supervision practices. They actively train students to gain awareness, knowledge, and skills in the competencies of multicultural practice.

**2. Gender, Communication, and Language:**

Given the cultural differences and considerations regarding gender, communication, and language, supervisors must be thoughtful in providing feedback, creating assignments, knowing about and providing resources for students (e.g., writing support), clarifying and being explicit about expectations,
and engaging in dialogue with supervisees. In addition, it is important for supervisors to not interpret a lack of participation from international supervisees as a lack of a desire to learn or engage. Exploring this with the supervisee can demonstrate support as well as increase clarity about what cultural or language barrier may be hindering their engagement.

Some other practical examples of supporting supervisees include providing clear expectations about how they can contribute to group and/or individual supervision, working with supervisees who are unsure of how to disagree with the supervisor or other supervisees, and giving supervisees articles/examples of teaching in the United States. We also suggest capitalizing on international supervisees’ strengths. International supervisees can provide important and differing perspectives, which can support supervisors and other supervisees in understanding individuals from his or her culture. Giving attention to the above reduces feelings of isolation and allows for greater participation in teaching supervision.

4. Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Other Technology:

If international supervisees come from a countries where teaching was not as technologically driven, it may prove difficult for the student to adjust. Thus, it is important that supervisors provide resources (IT training) or teach these supervisees how to utilize LMS and other technology utilized in teaching.

5. Sharing Resources

Sharing resources can give international supervisees a template for teaching within the United States and give them culturally relevant examples to connect course content to their students.

6. The American Student

As international students come from different educational systems, it is important to communicate with supervisees what American students typically expect from their teachers. Examples of this include classroom management considerations, grading policies, use of technology in the classroom (e.g., phones and laptops), etc. Again, this reinforces the importance of clearly and overtly making cultural expectations and norms explicit. This gives international supervisees clear direction and sets them up for success in the classroom. You cannot over-communicate!

7. Flexibility

At times, international supervisees may require additional support and flexibility. This brings into focus issues related to equity and equality. Supervisors are encouraged to make accommodations, where appropriate, to ensure international supervisees’ success (e.g., re-submitting papers, giving extra time on assignments, etc.)
Findings From Supervision of Teaching Case Study

Participant: Indian, female, doctoral counselor education and supervision student in CACREP-accredited university engaging in supervision of teaching

Data collection: Semi-structured interview and shadowing, field notes, and subjectivity journal

Coding: Developed themes from interview, shadow transcription, and field notes.

Trustworthiness: Member-checking after interview and final write up

Three Primary Themes:

1. Primacy of the Supervisory Relationship

She stated that her supervisor demonstrated trust, genuineness, acceptance, and a non-judgmental attitude toward her. Additionally, he specifically communicated his expectations to her and when he provided feedback to her about her performance, he gave specific positive and critical feedback. This reportedly helped her trust the supervisor more, strengthening the perceived relationship. The supervisor also frequently normalized her difficulties as a new teacher and used self-disclosure to validate and join her in this feeling. To illustrate, the following is a response from the participant.

It was really all about the relationship we had together. He put in a lot of effort to develop a relationship with me. The concern and the genuineness, I really appreciated it. For example, he would fill up with gas so that right after class we could leave. He cared about the fact that I had a lot to do. Somewhere I believed that he believed in me and had confidence in me. This gave me a boost. To actually say yes to take risk to coteach. He was also genuine. Genuineness goes a long way, even in his feedback he was genuine. Not saying things just to make me feel comfortable or good about myself. He would say this was bad this was good, but it was how he presented it that let me know that he cared.

In response to these actions toward her, the participant noted that her interactions with the supervisor became more genuine and trusting. She stated that she felt cared for and that she could more readily receive positive and critical feedback from him because of this. Additionally, she reported that as the strength of the relationship grew, she was able to take more risks in her teaching, not feel fearful or ashamed if she performed poorly, could try out different teaching approaches, and as a result to feel more confident and competent as a teacher.

2. Cultural Differences

The second theme that emerged was that of cultural differences in supervision. The participant noted that supervision in India is drastically different from supervision in the United States. She stated that in India, supervisors are “authoritative” and are viewed as holding “all of the power.” Supervisees are not allowed to question or challenge supervisors, and if they do it could negatively impact their ability to attain employment or to further their education. She also stated that supervisors provide almost all negative critical feedback and almost no positive or strengths-based feedback. In contrast, she reported that supervisors in America encourage supervisees to ask questions. Additionally, there is an explicit sharing of power and valuing of the supervisee’s experience/expertise. She noted that the feedback she has received in America is often “sugary” (i.e., too positive) and that she often requested and desired more critical feedback. Overall, she shared that she preferred supervision in America because of the
warmth and care experienced here. This has reportedly allowed her to feel more confident and comfortable in supervision of teaching. Again, to illustrate, here is a short response from the participant.

The relationship between supervisor and supervisees is very different here. Supervisees are allowed to question the supervisor, which was a surprise that they don’t accept everything the supervisor says as true. In India you do not question what the supervisor says. If you did, you would get in trouble or have bad grades. It is not like that here, supervisees can discuss preferences and the supervisor might accept and change their approach based on this. It will not affect this person’s career or grades, or a job. But if you ask or challenge in India it can negatively impact you getting jobs or even other things.

In my tradition, we see supervisors as having a lot of power. They are very authoritative, we aren’t supposed to ask questions. My supervisor here, on the other hand, would ask my opinion, give me space, appreciate my input, was not overly critical, gave feedback in a positive way, gave compliments as well as helping me see areas where I could improve. This helped me to receive the feedback easier and to feel free, even encouraged, to make mistakes in the classroom. It was safe. Even when I perform poorly, he still finds areas of strengths.

3. Structure and Process of Supervision

A final theme that emerged out of the student’s teaching supervision experience was the importance of the supervisor’s structuring (e.g., establishing regular and ongoing meeting times and articulating the students’ level of responsibility and role in coteaching) of the supervision including specific communication of the supervisor’s expectations (e.g., presentation content and delivery, how to teach students within this particular context, etc.) of the supervisee. This part of the supervisee’s experience facilitated and strengthened the other two aforementioned themes. This is captured in a response from the student in the semi-structured interview.

You know what the supervisor wants for you. It helped frame the feedback that the supervisor gave to me. Here is what you did well on and what you did poorly on given the expectations. It strengthened my relationship with the supervisor. That way I am not guessing, I can know what the goal is, it is very clear what I need to work toward. I like this. I need specific instructions on what I am expected to do. I would ask for deadlines. When to have such and such done. I don’t like it when people tell you to get things done whenever. Also, because of the cultural differences there are certain unspoken rules that I still do not understand. I am not sure about them. So, specific instructions help me to understand specifically what I need to do.

By providing a framework for the supervision time, the supervisor provided a basis by which to give feedback and evaluation, increased the supervisee’s trust and positive view of the relationship, and strengthened her confidence in performing teaching related tasks. It is also significant that by **overtly communicating “unspoken rules” and expectations of supervision and of teaching in this particular cultural context**, it allowed the student to feel more comfortable and confident in meeting the roles and responsibilities associated with each.
Reference and Other Helpful Resources:


