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TEACHER EDUCATION

A Comparison of Selected Supervisory Skills of Content Specialist and Non-Content Specialist University Supervisors

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe and contrast selected approaches to the supervision of student teachers between Content Specialist and Non-Content Specialist university supervisors. Content Specialist supervisors were identified as trained university supervisors with a background in physical education. Non-Content Specialist supervisors were identified as trained university supervisors without a background in physical education. Both groups of supervisors assessed a prerecorded stimulus tape of an authentic physical education student teaching lesson. The supervisors were asked to complete a written critique of the lesson and engage in an interview to discuss individual supervisory behaviors, strategies, and conferencing techniques. Both groups displayed minor similarities in preparing for, documenting, and constructing critiques of a student teaching observation. However, the two groups displayed a greater degree of disparity in approaches taken to supervision, resulting in the establishment of notable differences between Content Specialist and Non-Content Specialist supervisors.

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Professional teacher education programs incorporate a variety of school-based practicum and field experiences into their curriculum. These experiences are designed to enhance the procedural knowledge base of teacher candidates through providing pre-service teachers with authentic training. In particular, practicum experiences afford pre-service teachers the opportunity to develop an autonomous teaching style under the supervision of experienced professionals. The culminating field experience, typically labeled student teaching, is widely considered by students and those involved with training teachers to be the most important component of all teacher education programs (Coulon, 2000; Griffin & Combs, 2000; Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011; Koskela & Ganser, 1998).

Turney, Cairns, Eltis, Hatton, and Thew (1982) described student teaching as "the single most powerful intervention in a teacher's professional preparation" (p. 47). Teachers themselves have commented that the student teaching experience was the variable that had the greatest influence on their development as a new teacher (Wilson, 2006). These acknowledgements are largely because the experience places pre-service teachers in a position to engage in authentic practices that prompt lasting changes in the behaviors (Wilson, 2006).

Because of the positive fundamental outcomes associated with student teaching experiences, student teaching has become highly regarded as an integral and instrumental component of the process of developing qualified teachers. Being such a foundational element of teacher development programs, this process requires continuous analysis for enhancement. If student teaching is truly the "capstone of pre-service training" as described by Anderson (2007, p. 307), teacher education programs should be incorporating all necessary best practice policies to make the experience as effective and efficient as possible. The purpose of this study was to describe and contrast selected approaches to the supervision of student teachers between content specialist and non-content specialist university supervisors to determine if a distinct difference exists between their approaches to supervision.

To clarify the university supervisor role within the student teaching experience, an overview of the student teaching triad roles will be presented. Also, content specialist university supervisors will be differentiated from non-content specialists university supervisors.

Student Teaching Triad

The student teaching triad is a collective body of three distinct members who work cohesively throughout the student teaching experience. The three roles in the triad are the student teacher, the cooperating teacher, and the university supervisor (Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011; McIntyre, 1984; Murphy, 2010).

The student teacher, who has successfully navigated the content and methodology coursework of a particular discipline, engages in the student teaching experience, a culminating event of most teacher preparation programs. During student teaching, the student teacher will face general responsibilities that are often noninstructional in nature, specific responsibilities wherein compliance and successful navigation of the experience is mandatory based on university stipulations, observational responsibilities that promote meta-cognitive development, and teaching responsibilities that are used to demonstrate the student teacher's ability to assimilate into the role of practitioner.

The cooperating teacher, who is responsible for facilitating instructional and noninstructional practices in the authentic school setting, ideally works collaboratively with the university supervisor to develop the pedagogical content knowledge of the student teacher. Instructionally, the cooperating teacher is instrumental in providing day-to-day mentorship, guidance, and feedback to facilitate student teacher development (Veal & Rikard, 1998; Coleman & Mitchell, 2000; Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011). In this regard, the role of the cooperating teacher largely coincides with the role of the university supervisor. However, the cooperating teacher role is distinctive from the university supervisor role in that cooperating teachers are the triad members predominantly responsible for facilitating noninstructional practices that are necessary in assisting the student teacher with the transition into becoming an independent teacher (Anderson, 2007). Grimmett and Ratzlaff (1986) and Koskela and Ganser (1998) noted that the cooperating teacher largely provides the student teacher with information unrelated to instruction, that is, necessary for successful immersion into the school setting including school rules, policies, procedures, staff introductions, and tours of the school grounds. McIntyre (1984), Koskela and Ganser (1998), and Anderson (2007) further noted that the cooperating teacher is responsible for socializing the student teacher into the school community, promoting productive assimilation procedures that allow

the student teacher to feel welcomed and comfortable in the instructional setting.

The final member of the triad, the university supervisor, inhabits a position with a multitude of responsibilities. Under the majority of supervisory models, the dominant responsibilities of the university supervisor revolve around procedures connected to conducting scheduled visits and observations of the student teacher's performance at the host school setting. According to Metzler (1990), "Training and experience probably make the university supervisor the most qualified to deliver supervisory functions" (p. 40). These functions include preobservation meetings during which the student teacher and supervisor engage in dialogue concerning the events that will transpire during the lessons to be observed; the supervisor being familiar with a host of systematic observation instruments needed to record the necessary data displayed during the teaching experience accurately and effectively; and the supervisor's ability to structure postobservation conferences during which constructive, specific, congruent feedback is provided to the student teacher to further develop desired professional growth (Metzler, 2011).

Content Specialists vs. Non-Content Specialists

The role of the university supervisor has the potential to be filled by individuals who are either Content Specialists (CS), supervisors with a content-specific background in the area of placement for the student teacher, or Non-Content Specialists (NCS), individuals without a content-specific background in the area of placement for the student teacher. It has been presumed that NCS lack the technical language, systematic observation ability, and pedagogical content knowledge of a specialist supervisor (Metzler, 1990, 2011). This is potentially significant as Shulman (1986) stated that all three of the aforementioned variables, especially pedagogical content knowledge, are "instrumental in representing and formulating the subject matter in a comprehensible way to others" (p. 9). Hence, it is reasonable to argue that CS supervisors should assume the university supervisor role. Furthermore, Siedentop (1981), Strand (1992), and Metzler (2011) argued that supervisors who have been trained in the use of systematic observation methods for a particular context may be better suited to collect and interpret concrete data used in conferences with student teachers.

However, despite the presumed positive outcomes associated with the use of CS, a host of mitigating circumstances affect the ap-

pointment of university supervisors during student teaching practicum. One of the greatest obstacles impeding the use of CS appears to revolve around economic variables and the constraints on monetary and personnel resources plaguing schools, colleges, and departments of education. As these institutions are forced to stretch monetary and personnel allocations, best practice policies appear to suffer. As budget cuts continue and staffing roles are stretched, the university supervisor role in the student teaching experience appears to be largely filled by NCS supervisors. The effect this may have on the development of student teachers warrants attention.

Method

Participants

Twenty university supervisors (US), 10 CS and 10 NCS, were selected for participation in the study through a convenience sample. The 20 US were recruited from a large southeastern university in the United States. The CS group consisted of US with content-specific teaching and supervising backgrounds in physical education. The NCS group consisted of US with content-specific teaching and supervising backgrounds in educational fields other than physical education including elementary education, secondary education, higher education, counselor education, and library/media education. The two groups of US (CS and NCS) completed student teaching supervisory training at the same university under the Assisting, Developing, Evaluating, Professional Teaching (ADEPT) program. The ADEPT program is a formal, comprehensive student teacher assessment program. US are trained to evaluate student teachers in four domains: (a) planning, (b) instruction, (c) environment, and (d) professional development. Each domain consists of an unequal number of ADEPT performance standards, which are measures of specifically targeted knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential to teacher effectiveness. Participants were currently, or had been within the past year, working in a university supervisor capacity, evaluating student teacher performance.

Exclusionary criteria were implemented to avoid bias in the NCS population. NCS supervisors with prior physical education content knowledge, a strong background in the area of basketball (the student teaching instructional content area), and/or significant experience in coaching in general were eliminated from participation in the study.

The CS and NCS groups were determined to be similar in the areas of years acting in a supervisory capacity (CS: $M = 6$, $SD = .42$; NCS: $M = 5$, $SD = .48$), supervisory training (ADEPT trained), and gender representation (CS: eight female, two male; NCS: nine female, one male). However, the two groups were slightly different in terms of mean age and mean years working in the public school system in a teaching capacity. CS reported a mean age of 44, three years younger than the NCS mean age of 47. CS also reported a lower mean average of years working in the public school setting: 8 years to the NCS 1 year. These differences were determined to be minimal and unlikely to have a significant effect on study findings.

Design Overview

The current study is a follow-up to the 2000 investigation "Assessing Observation Focus and Conference Targets of Cooperating Teachers" (Coleman & Mitchell, 2000). As such, the following study design largely mirrors the procedures and protocols implemented in the aforementioned investigation. Twenty university supervisors, 10 CS and 10 NCS, were asked to independently (a) prepare for a mock student teaching observation as if it were an authentic experience, (b) observe a recording of an authentic student teaching lesson (stimulus tape), (c) complete a written critique of the observed lesson following ADEPT protocols, and (d) engage in a semistructured interview with the researcher following the observation to discuss supervisory behaviors, strategies, and conferencing techniques to be employed in a postobservation conference with the student teacher. Specifically, the intention of the study was to discern categorical variations that exist between CS and NCS supervisors' approaches to student teaching supervision through an analysis of (a) how university supervisors approach planning for an observation, (b) how university supervisors look at specific aspects of a student teaching lesson, (c) to what university supervisors provide attention during a student teaching lesson, and (d) what strategies and/or techniques university supervisors implement when supervising student teachers.

Preobservation Assessment Protocol

Each US data collection session was conducted separately. Prior to the observation session and the viewing of the stimulus tape, US were provided contextual information regarding the placement site and population, along with background information concern-

ing the lesson and the student teacher. In this briefing, information was provided related to the student teacher's experience level, location within the teacher preparation program, amount of time at the current placement site, previous course grades, observed strengths and weaknesses related to teaching, and previous conference topics discussed. US were provided identical information from a scripted protocol, yet were invited to ask further questions deemed essential.

Following the dissemination of the contextual and background information, US were provided identical instructions via a written protocol for observing the stimulus tape. This protocol included four sections. First, participants were instructed on how to manipulate the playing device to pause, rewind, and fast-forward the stimulus tape if needed. US were also informed that the opportunity was available during viewing sessions to request clarification on topics related to the teacher or lesson from the researcher. Second, US were provided detailed written instructions (formal ADEPT guidelines) on what to prepare in terms of a written critique. Third, US were informed that a postobservation interview would be held with the researcher to discuss the written critiques completed. Finally, US were informed that the postobservation interview would also be used to discuss anticipated supervisory strategies they planned to implement if a postobservation conference with the student teacher were to take place.

Stimulus Tape Lesson

After the written protocol instructions were provided, US viewed the stimulus tape while in the presence of the researcher, who observed supervisory behaviors live, generating field notes on those behaviors displayed. The tape viewed by the US was an authentic student teaching experience of a basketball lesson taught to a fourth grade class. Supervisors were informed that the lesson was a representative account of consistent and prevalent behavior on the part of the student teacher at the elementary setting. The tape was determined an accurate audible and visual representation of a student teaching lesson, consistent with what a US would see and hear in an authentic student teaching observation.

Writing the Critique

US were directed to assess the lesson as an authentic caseload experience. US were free to employ those strategies that most suited individual styles. These included strategies such as preparing for the observation by bringing tools, supplies, observation instruments,

and assessment forms consistently used during observations and employing those tools as needed to collect data essential for written critiques. However, regardless of individual strategies implemented to supplement determinations of strengths and weaknesses of observed aspects of the lesson, US were requested to construct the final written critique of the lesson using the ADEPT recording instrument. These formal ADEPT reports were used as the basis for the discussions that ensued in the semistructured postobservation interviews between the researcher and the US.

Postviewing Interview

Following the viewing of the stimulus tape and the completion of the formal written critique, each US engaged in a semistructured interview with the researcher. These interviews were designed to procure two sets of data. First, US were prompted to elaborate on what was stated in the written critiques regarding the student teacher's strengths and weaknesses. This was an opportunity for US to offer rationalizations and justifications to support decisions made regarding observed desired behaviors requiring maintenance and undesired behaviors requiring remediation. Second, the interviews were used to ascertain what information the US focused on as areas of priority, the manner in which the US would structure or sequence comments to be made to the student teacher in a postobservation conference, and the conference environmental setting arrangement. This was an opportunity for the US to offer explanations regarding preference of conference style and approach. Scripted protocol questions were implemented to prompt US responses, and probing questions were used to elicit elaborations on specific decisions made regarding particular topics. Interviews were video-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Data Collection and Analysis

Three primary sources of data were analyzed using qualitative procedures. First, the researcher generated field notes to outline observable approaches to the process of supervision implemented by the US. These field notes were generated while US were viewing the stimulus tape. In the field notes, the researcher recorded data identifying how many and what specific contextual and background questions US asked prior to viewing the lesson, which US brought instruments or assessments to the observation, what types of instruments were employed, whether the instruments were appropriate for

the lesson, and which US viewed the lesson in real time and which US displayed a propensity for controlled viewing options. Second, the researcher evaluated the written critiques generated by the US for identifiable similarities and differences related to prioritization of attention to observed student teacher strengths and weaknesses. Third, the transcribed postobservation interviews between the researcher and the US were evaluated for noticeable similarities and differences between the two groups' approaches to facilitating postobservation conferences.

The data sources were compared using strategies associated with the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Three phases of coding (open, axial, and selective) were implemented to analyze data sources. Each subsequent phase of coding was designed to reduce data from broad, general themes to more specific categories for comparison.

During open coding, each of the data sources for each US was analyzed to generate broad emergent themes. Graphic organizers were constructed to organize independent themes by US group (CS and NCS) and by data source (field notes, written critiques, and interviews). Table1 categories are representations of the emergent themes identified representing strengths and weaknesses the US addressed in the written critiques.

During axial coding, specific topics observed, written, or discussed were organized into subcategories supporting each broad category. Subcategories were represented as exhaustive lists, addressing all major data points related to each broad category. Table 1 subcategories are representations of the specific topics identified representing strengths and weaknesses the US addressed in the written critiques.

Table 1
Critique Positive and Negative Comments

	Positive		Negative	
Categories and subcategories	**CS**	**NCS**	**CS**	**NCS**
Lesson Objectives	6	8	1	1
Appropriateness	6	8	1	1
	(5%)	(7%)	(2%)	(2%)

Table 1 (cont.)

	Positive		Negative	
Categories and subcategories	**CS**	**NCS**	**CS**	**NCS**
ADEPT Standards	8	7	0	1
APS 1–9	8	7	0	1
	(6%)	(6%)	(0%)	(2%)
Instruction	10	10	9	9
Set-Induction	0	4	0	0
Scaffolding	0	6	0	0
Sequencing	0	3	0	2
Initial Tast	6	0	1	0
Extension Task	8	0	1	0
Refinement Tast	5	0	3	0
Application Tast	2	0	7	0
Assessment	0	2	7	6
Feedback	4	6	5	7
Cues	6	2	2	0
Demonstration	7	4	2	2
Checks for Understanding	4	3	4	4
Practice Time	7	5	2	2
Differentiated Instruction	3	1	0	0
	(40%)	(34%)	(57%)	(46%)
Management	10	10	3	2
Time	7	8	0	0
Transition	4	4	0	0
Structuring/Directing	4	0	3	0
Safety	3	2	3	2
Signals	6	9	0	0
	(19%)	(21%)	(10%)	(4%)

Table 1 (cont.)

Categories and subcategories	Positive		Negative	
	CS	NCS	CS	NCS
Student Teacher	9	10	4	8
Perimiter Movement	7	0	1	0
Proximity	3	2	2	8
Content Knowledge	5	8	3	0
Speaking Skills	3	4	3	4
Disposition	6	4	2	5
	(19%)	(17%)	(18%)	(34%)
Learners	9	9	5	6
Acquired Skills	6	7	5	0
Behavior	7	8	0	0
Movement/Interaction	1	1	3	6
	(11%)	(15%)	(13%)	(12%)

Note. CS = content special; NCS = non-content specialist; APS = ADEPT performance standard.

During selective coding, individual raw data units were organized into prevalence tables, representing which US addressed which topics and whether those topics were addressed positively or negatively. Table 1 percentages are representations of US prevalence rates of positive and negative comments addressed in the written critiques. The percentages generated during selective coding were the primary data units used for US group comparisons.

Reliability

Intrarater reliability was achieved through recoding four randomly selected participant data sources, two from each group, 2 weeks after initial coding. This process has been used in similar studies (Coleman & Mitchell, 2000). Recoding accuracy was established at greater than 90%.

Results

How Do University Supervisors Look at a Student Teaching Lesson?

The combined data sources of field notes, written critiques, and supervisor interviews indicated five distinct differences in how CS and NCS look at student teaching lessons. First, CS sought a greater amount of contextual information concerning a lesson to arrange the lens through which they view the lesson. During this study, CS made 62 distinct requests for additional contextual information compared to 30 requests NCS made. Some of these requests were similar, primarily including variations of "How long has the student teacher been at the current placement?"; "How has the student teacher performed up to this point?"; and "What feedback has the student teacher received so far concerning strengths and weaknesses?" However, CS consistently requested more in-depth information related to the lesson, asking questions concerning availability of equipment and space, learners' previous engagement levels with the lesson content, class variability ranges with regard to inclusion practices for special needs learners and other high–low level learner populations, and information regarding the student teaching program at the time the video was recorded. These were articulated as being instrumental knowledge for aligning assessment procedures with the focus of a particular program, as program emphasis significantly affects the manner in which a student teacher implements teaching practices.

Second, CS displayed a propensity for watching a lesson in real time and NCS displayed a need for controlled viewing opportunities. This was evident through a comparison of the number of tape-stoppages observed for individuals in the two groups: a recorded 13 stops for CS and 76 stops for NCS. The majority of NCS stoppages revolved around two areas. Foremost, NCS appeared to struggle with maintaining focus on the lesson while writing notes, prompting the majority of NCS to pause the tape when taking notes. Second, NCS stoppages were used to rewind the video to provide the viewer with extra opportunities to observe events of perceived importance that were missed. CS stoppages primarily revolved around direct clarification questions regarding information provided prior to viewing the lesson, such as "You said he was here for three weeks?" after noticing the student teacher's inability to use students names during instruction.

Third, CS displayed tendencies for observing a greater number of critical features in a lesson, which corresponded to a greater number of scripted observations in critiques. This was evident through an analysis of the scripted observations generated by the US, in which the CS critiques were found to be twice as long, containing twice the amount of information of the critiques generated by the NCS. This information was largely centered on salient features related to the lesson task progression, in which CS were descriptive with identifying and discussing strengths and weaknesses related to extension, refinement, and application tasks.

Fourth, the level of specificity demonstrated in the CS written critiques appeared to be instrumental in aiding CS with prioritizing conference discussion topics related to observed strengths and weaknesses. In structuring conference topics by perceived priority, CS appeared to be capable of adding a level of depth to postobservation conference discussions that was not evident in NCS conference plans.

Fifth, CS used a vocabulary that was different from NCS in the construction of critiques, displaying the ability to use a content-specific technical language to represent subject matter.

What Do University Supervisors Look at During a Student Teaching Lesson?

Based on the written critiques, US within both groups displayed a propensity for providing significant attention to four distinct areas during observations. As is readily identified in Table 1, US provided the greatest amount of attention to instructional aspects of the lesson, classroom management, the student teacher's behavior and disposition, and the learners themselves.

Table 1 categories and subcategories are representations of topics US addressed in the written critiques. The underlined numbers in Table 1 represent the number of US per group making a statement concerning each main category. The subsequent numbers corresponding to each subcategory represent the number of US in each group specifically commenting upon those particular areas. For example, under the main category of Student Teacher, nine CS and 10 NCS stated positive remarks concerning the student teacher. Seven of the nine CS remarked that perimeter movement was a positive aspect of the student teacher's instructional performance, whereas none of the NCS noted perimeter movement as a positive aspect of instructional performance. CS positive remarks regarding student

teacher behavior accounted for 19% of CS positive written observations.

Strategies and/or Techniques University Supervisors Use When Facilitating a Conference

The analysis of the postobservation interview transcripts revealed five significant differences in the strategies and techniques CS and NCS employ to facilitate student teacher conferences.

First, an evaluation of the logistical concerns affecting conferences resulted in noted differences between the two groups. The groups had different opinions related to how long a postobservation conference should last and what should be addressed during the conference. The length the CS stated for conferences with the stimulus tape was considerably longer than the reported conference lengths the NCS noted: approximately 60 min for CS and 30 min for NCS. CS expressed a favorable opinion for discussing fewer topics in greater detail, specifically focusing on prioritized areas of perceived weakness requiring remediation. NCS, on the other hand, expressed a favorable position for covering an exhaustive number of witnessed strengths and weaknesses, only with a minimal degree of specificity, using primarily a listing approach.

Second, the two groups of supervisors displayed differences with comments related to the tone and atmosphere required for conference proceedings to be effective. CS were adamant that the setting should be formal and student teacher directed–supervisor facilitated. However, CS identified numerous practical explanations for why their personal preference for conference direction is limited by individual student teacher characteristics. These explanations primarily revolved around the notion that the degree of facilitation required to guide a conference is dependent on the level of active engagement the student teacher displays. NCS, on the other hand, were divided on their conference format preference. Half voiced favorable opinions for formal settings that were supervisor directed, and the other half favored informal settings that were student teacher directed. The NCS decisions were unanimously based on supervisor personal experience and preference rather than student needs or other contextual variables.

Third, variations were noted with regard to promoting the maintenance of observed areas of strength during conference proceedings. CS supervisors voiced a preference for using reflective approaches that used contextual information to reinforce continued

practice through synthesizing the importance and significance of desired practices. NCS supervisors voiced a preference for using a positive reinforcement procedure that simply stated approval of observed positive practices.

Fourth, with regard to remediation techniques for areas of perceived weakness, both groups voiced a variety of strategies for achieving desired goals. Consistently, US in both groups stated that all areas of remediation should be addressed with constructive, professional, positive tones. However, CS were more direct in their approach to handling remediation, stating clarification of weaknesses and explicitness, with corrective strategies as significant factors in fostering remediation of weak areas of performance. NCS were more indirect in their approach, stating a preference for leaving the student teacher to determine if discussed areas of perceived weaknesses required further attention for improvement. In such instances, the student teacher would be provided with multiple options to consider for enhancing instructional aspects, but would ultimately be left alone to make a final decision on a plan of action.

Finally, variations were found between the two groups in relation to the preference of use of systematic observation instruments in conference proceedings. CS expressed favoring objective assessment measures such as systematic observation instrumentation to validate conference discussion topics. NCS expressed favoring subjective assessment procedures such as simple observations, mental checklists, and anecdotal recordings to guide conference proceedings. NCS never discussed the notion that student teachers may question the validity of supervisor comments based solely on subjective assessment procedures.

Discussion

How Do University Supervisors Look at a Student Teaching Lesson?

An analysis of supervisors' requests for contextual information prior to an observation indicates that CS approach observations with a different perspective than NCS. It is apparent that CS possess finer discriminatory capabilities than NCS, which are expressed through an ability to be more inquisitive about the student teacher, the environmental setting, the learning population, and intricate details associated with the lesson. Sizer (1984) noted that this heightened sense of finer discriminatory capabilities is crucial to effective

supervision. The CS consistency in requesting specific information indicates that such solicited information is essential data for observing and analyzing the student teacher and the student teaching lesson. Therefore, CS may be placing themselves in a better position to assess student teaching experiences analytically through requesting contextual information, which directly enhances the discriminatory lens through which the lesson is viewed.

Along with the noted variation in preparatory strategies, the two groups displayed contrasting approaches for observing the lesson. The CS displayed an affinity for viewing the stimulus tape in real time. The NCS, on the other hand, consistently displayed an affinity for manipulating the playing device to pause and review intricate aspects of the lesson. Therefore, the NCS as a group required significantly more time than the CS group to view the student teaching lesson. Because student teaching observations generally occur in live contextual settings, in which US are not afforded ideal circumstances associated with audio-video recordings, CS appear to be in a position to be more efficient with supervision responsibilities. Furthermore, the level of efficiency displayed by the CS indicates that they respond to stimuli more quickly due to the ability to function at a level of automaticity within a content-specific area of focus, which is a trait associated with expertise (Siedentop & Eldar, 1989).

CS also displayed the ability to witness and record a greater number of strengths and weaknesses in the lesson with greater specificity than the NCS. Thus, it is apparent that CS are more adept than NCS at identifying critical and salient features within a lesson. This ability is directly related to Sizer's (1984) and Siedentop and Eldar's (1989) claims that expertise is a matter of fine stimulus control in which experts see things that nonexperts do not see due to enhanced meta-cognitive capabilities associated with a particular content area.

A variation was also noted between the two groups in the technical language applied to written critiques and verbal responses. The technical language consistently implemented by the CS was in accordance with terms, concepts, and vocabulary associated with the content of the student teaching subject matter. Examples are evident in Table 1, under the Instruction category, as CS consistently referred to all four sections of the standard physical education task progression, whereas NCS never mentioned these foundational lesson components. The NCS language, however, was predominantly laden with general education terminology, which is recorded in Table 1. This finding reinforces the notion that CS within the field

of physical education can articulate and rationalize observations of performance more effectively than NCS. Shulman (1986) referred to this type of ability displayed by the CS as pedagogical content knowledge, which he noted as "representing and formulating the subject to make it comprehensible to others" (p. 9).

What Do University Supervisors Look at During a Student Teaching Lesson?

Both groups of supervisors reported that a proactive approach was implemented with observation strategies in which specific events, actions, and behaviors were sought out for evaluation in the student teaching lesson as opposed to taking a more holistic approach to observation in an attempt to identify emergent areas of strengths and weaknesses. The dominant categories receiving attention were Instruction, Management, Student Teacher, and Learners. CS, displaying finer discriminatory capabilities, were more detailed in their identification of subcategories pertaining to each main category and more consistent as a group in identifying areas of subcategories. This ability further indicates that CS approach student teaching observations with a more consistent and critical perspective than NCS, a notion reinforced by Glaser and Chi (1988), who stated that experts have the ability to visualize domain-specific components at deeper levels than novices, who generally only see the superficial levels. With this ability, CS have the potential to be in a position to acquire significantly more relevant data than can NCS, which is necessary in facilitating functional postobservation conferences that are constructive in advancing the pedagogical skills of student teachers.

Strategies and/or Techniques University Supervisors Use When Facilitating a Conference

Logistical concerns. CS voiced the opinion that conferences should be held the same day as the student teaching observation, ideally immediately after the observation. This position parallels that of the physical education instructional supervision model (Metzler, 1990), in which timely feedback on performance is required to prompt desired improvements in teaching practices. Contrastingly, NCS expressed a preference for a reflection period of between 2 and 4 days to prepare for the conference, a time potentially beyond the timely feedback range. CS and NCS also had different opinions concerning conference length. CS stated that conference length was

conditional, being dependent on the amount of content requiring discussion. NCS, on the other hand, tended to attempt to schedule conferences by self-imposed time limitations rather than content. Coincidentally, CS expressed that topics for discussion should be arranged by necessity and priority and subsequently discussed with a level of depth required to foster maintenance of desired practices and remediation of undesired practices. Conversely, NCS expressed a mentality favoring the coverage of all identified areas of strengths and weaknesses, but with minimal depth, within a specific time frame.

Conference tone. CS were in agreement that the postobservation conference should follow a formal, structured process. These supervisors were in agreement that the conference was the most crucial aspect of the student teaching experience and thereby should be planned meticulously, organized with a set direction, and ultimately specifically focused on achieving identified outcomes to enhance instructional skills. NCS expressed a preference for facilitating informal conferences, which were described as being representative of authentic conference settings in which teachers were likely to engage in real-life scenarios. They believed that this style of conferencing was more collaborative and less one dimensional, and thereby, the level of reciprocity achieved through informal conferencing was foreseen as fostering higher rates of engagement and ownership on the part of the student teacher.

Maintenance of strengths and remediation of weaknesses. CS expressed a preference for facilitating reflective procedures to foster maintenance of desired practices, whereas NCS expressed a preference for using positive reinforcement to maintain strengths. CS were adamant in specifying that reflective procedures were instrumental in using authentic experiences to solidify the procedural knowledge base and thereby foster the continuation of desired practices and behaviors. CS also expressed a more detailed approach for remediating weaknesses. Only areas of priority were to be specifically identified and focused on for change. Clarification for the student teacher as to why a behavior or practice was undesirable was viewed as an essential step in fostering change. With the area of weakness identified, clear feedback was deemed essential for relating what the CS wanted to see changed and how that change should occur. NCS favored a more indirect approach to remediating areas of weakness. A comprehensive approach was favored for listing all noted areas of weakness to bring them to the attention of the student

teacher. Once topics were identified, a brief collaborative discussion would be used to provide the student teacher with options to consider for possible solutions to perceived areas of weakness, with no discernible focus on prioritization.

Assessment measures. CS expressed a favorable approach for implementing objective assessment procedures. CS identified objective systematic observation instruments as being more accurate, carrying more weight in the conference, and being more convenient for pre–post comparisons to note behavior changes than nonsystematic or subjective data collection techniques. NCS tended to favor subjective observation assessment procedures, relying heavily on individual observational skills such as eyeballing and anecdotal recordings, in both preference and practice. However, the identified observable behaviors of the CS under the conditions of this study indicate that a potential disconnect may exist between espoused preference and actual practice with assessment procedures. CS were observed favoring subjective assessment procedures while conducting observational recordings during this study.

Conclusions and Implications

The student teaching experience is the capstone event of teacher preparation programs. As such, continuous evaluation of student teaching is necessary to promote best practice policies. The examination of the data collected during this study resulted in three significant conclusions and implications related to best practice policies with regard to university supervision.

First, CS saw more detail in less time. From a pragmatic perspective, this economy of time yields greater efficiency of effort, which matters when assigning multiple student teachers to individual supervisors. The level of automaticity the CS displayed in this study, coupled with a display of finer discriminatory capabilities, indicates that CS possess characteristics associated with expertise as defined by Siedentop and Eldar (1989) and Ericsson, Krampe, and Tesch-Römer (1993). Hence, CS appear to be in a position to be more efficient university supervisors.

Second, CS tended to focus conference attention on specific, immediate teaching skills, whereas NCS tended to focus conference attention on general professional development. As student teaching is the final preparatory experience offering pre-service teachers the necessary skills to hone their craft, it stands to reason the emphasis of supervision during student teaching should lie on the enhancement of teaching skills over autonomy development.

Third, CS expressed a preference for holding a postobservation conference on the same day as the observation to provide immediate feedback. NCS, on the other hand, preferred to allow time for themselves and the student teacher to process the lesson before holding a conference. Both practices are products of preference and time, but the current prevailing supervisory mentality aligns with Metzler's (1990) notion that "an effective supervisory approach implements a system where the performance data that are collected and analyzed are presented in post-observation conferences immediately following the teaching session" (p. 31). Hence, there may be merit to evaluating programmatic mandates on acceptable latency periods between observations and conferences to ensure that student teachers are receiving timely feedback. In combination with this conclusion, this finding signals the need for at least periodic auditing of the performance of university supervisors to ensure that behaviors are consistent with program goals.

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