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ABSTRACT

The supervision of interns in field settings has traditionally posed problems for university faculty members. While most professors would agree that supervision of interns is important, it is generally viewed as an add-on to an already full complement of responsibilities. The present study was designed to examine the effects of a faculty feedback system on the supervision of interns. It would appear that several key elements that proved successful in this instance could be adapted by faculty at other universities. A sample of a supervisor's visit report form used by faculty to provide feedback is attached. (Author/JD)

A FACULTY FEEDBACK SYSTEM

FOR THE SUPERVISION OF INTERNS

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Abstract

The supervision of interns in field settings has traditionally posed problems for university faculty members. While most professors would agree that supervision of interns is important, it is generally viewed as an add-on to an already full complement of responsibilities. The present study was designed to examine the effects of a faculty feedback system on the supervision of interns. It would appear that several key elements which proved successful in this instance could be adapted by faculty at other universities.

The professional development of preservice teachers requires that students be provided with quality internship programs (Wargner & Aldinger, 1984). Opportunities for practice and systemic feedback are essential for the developing teacher (Reith, Polsgrove, Frick, Goh & Eckert, 1985). Most educators would agree that supervision of this process is a most important responsibility (Rolider, Pierce, Van Houten, Molcho & Ylevitch, 1985). Yet, the reward system of a university (promotion, tenure, merit pay) frequently does not take into account the supervision of interns.

Persons employed as faculty in university settings are typically expected to work in three major areas; teaching, research/scholarship and service. Those faculty who are associated with professional preparation programs (education, social work, psychology) are often required to be supervisors of students in practicum settings as well. While most professors in these situations would agree that supervision is an important job and one which should be competently done, it is generally viewed as an add-on to an already full compliment of responsibilities.

Chairpersons of education departments are typically placed in the unenviable position of requesting that faculty engage in work which requires travel to sites, observations and conferences, all of which can be very time consuming (Pierce, 1978; Pierce, Perelman & Cody, 1981) and for which there is little or no pay off within the university structure.

Improving the process of supervision of interns both qualitatively and quantitatively in light of the typical university demands of faculty time and expertise present a substantial challenge (Bennie, 1972; Morris, 1974; Warger & Aldinger, 1984).

The present study represents the initial phase of a research project designed to examaine the key elements of a successful supervision package. The first phase was designed to encourage all faculty members to be involved in the supervision process to increase the number of classroom observations of interns, and to provide written feedback of observations to the intern, the cooperating teacher and the department chairperson.

The principles of positive reinforcement and feedback (Van Houten, 1980; Whyte, Van Houten & Hunter, 1983) were incorporated into a faculty feedback system.

Faculty Feedback System

The faculty feedback system consisted of two major components.

1. Initial Faculty Meeting

The first department faculty meeting of the fall semester was devoted to the topic of internship supervision. A discussion was held on the importance of the internship for the student, for good working relations between university and public schools and for collaborative research efforts. Faculty were all in agreement that the internship was an important aspect of the various training programs within the department. Who should be involved in supervision? How many site visits should be made during the semester? What kind of feedback should be provided for the intern and cooperating teacher? These were questions which had not heretofore been systematically addressed by faculty. At this meeting it was decided that:

a. all faculty would be involved in the supervision process,

b. a minimum of five visits for each intern should be made,

c. all faculty would use the same observation/data sheet (see Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 About Here

d. these observation forms could become part of the faculty members portfolio for the annual review process. The observation/data sheets were desisgned in multiple copies. One copy each was to be provided to the intern, the cooperating teacher, the university supervisor and the department chairperson.

2. Series of Memos

Data on the number of observations of interns and of the written comments was analyzed (see Figure 2) and a series of four memos was designed.

Insert Figure 2 About Here

The first provided praise for participation in the supervision process and gave specific feedback on the number of visits that a faculty member had made (see Figure 3).

Insert Figure 3 About Here

The next memos provided praise, specific feedback and suggestions regarding the nature of comments which might prove helpful (see Figure 4).

Insert Figure 4 About Here

Results and Analysis

This study proved to be highly successful for the eighty-one interns and nineteen faculty who participated. During the two weeks of baseline a total of fourteen visits each week were recorded. Once the Faculty Feedback System was implemented, the number of weekly site visits ranged from eighteen to (see Figure 5) forty-one with a mean of twenty-seven. All faculty members from instructors to full professors were assigned interns in public schools or social service agencies. A total of 406 site visits were recorded for the fall semester.

Insert Figure 5 About Here

The use of the above strategy to enhance the delivery of supervision to interns made an important contribution to the organizational health of the college and the university. While field experience had enjoyed support as an essential component of professional training in education, administrative encouragement for it has not always been perceived by education faculty or by school professionals. Our work has placed student-teacher supervision in a place of heightened focus, a condition that had not existed at our institution for more than a decade. The implication is that this strategy may have transferability to other institutions wishing to enhance intership supervision.

Some distinct benefits resulted from the work described here. First, the faculty feedback strategy was a major component of a justification statement for adjusting the faculty to student ratio for professional education courses at our university. Prior to our documentation of visits the faculty to

student ratio for courses in the college was 14:1. Following extensive argumentation by our dean to central administration, supported by our data, this ratio was changed to 11:1. Clearly, what led to the institutional policy change was the new evidence, systematically obtained, of the extensive time commitment supervision in clinical settings required. Our obligation now that supervision has been institutionally highlighted is to focus on qualitative measures that could not be adequately addressed in the initial phase of our work.

A second benefit from the implementation of this faculty feedback system was that area schools responded positively to the strong presence of our faculty in their classrooms. While evidence was undeniably anecdotal, the perception of the change in supervisory practice was noted by school people and was welcome news to those in administrative roles within the university. Often our faculty was able to provide ideas and resources for other teachers at the school and represented an important professional contact for teachers and school administrators. Simply stated, we gained enormously in "good will." In our judgment the active collaboration of higher education faculty and public school educators in training members of the profession is probably the way teacher preparation programs ought to operate.

A third contribution of this intensified effort at achieving better intern supervision is undoubtedly the most important. Our students at the university who have made substantial commitments to engage in study to become teachers deserve the best training we can provide. While our students' evaluation of campus-based instruction has generally been strongly positive, their perception had been that once student teaching began, they were largely

on their own. That review of the internship component was simply not acceptable and had to be corrected.

Next Steps

While use of the feedback system work reported here certainly met our expectations for heightening attention toward supervision of interns, in many ways our work is just beginning. In order to advance the quality of the internship a number of actions seem indicated. In the next phase of our work, a number of these activities will be addressed. They are listed below with brief commentary to suggest their significance in improving our teacher education programs:

1) The content of the supervisory report needs to be analyzed. Simply put, some supervisory reports were better than others. What normative basis for that judgment can be made? What generalizations can be made about the reports? Can we find common threads that suggest shortcomings in our campus-based instruction?
2) Faculty development to enhance supervisory performance may appear to be desirable. If that is the case, what should be the nature of that training effort and how can its effectiveness be measured?
3) Data from cooperatiang teachers in schools and from our student teachers might be collected to determine strength and weaknesses of current supervisory efforts.
4) Faculty loads for supervision may need to be redefined. It is obviously more convenient to make visits to 5 interns assigned to a single school than to visit the same number of interns located at schools throughout the region. If we institutionally value having

faculty engaged in supervision as part of their instructional responsibilities, what constitutes justification for not being assigned student-teacher supervision?

5) The relationship of the internship to other components of the teacher education process needs to be examined. By focusing only on the internship we may fail to see the entire continuum of pre-professional training and inappropriately de-value certain components.

6) The selection of cooperating teachers needs to be addressed and guidelines established for who these individuals shall be. Can we attain an appropriate match between the cooperating teacher and the goals of the training program? On what basis are prospective cooperating teachers rejected?

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Figure 1

SUPERVISOR'S VISIT REPORT

College of Education & Social Services
Department of Professional Education & Curriculum Development

- ☐ Elementary Education Program
- ☐ Responsive Teacher Program
- ☐ American Primary Education Program
- ☐ Secondary Education Program

UVM Supervisors should complete a visit report for each visit made to a student's practicum placement. One copy of the report should be given to the student, one copy to the cooperating teacher, one copy to the department, and one copy retained by the UVM supervisor.

Date:_____ Visit #_____

Time of Observation: From_____to_____

Type of Placement: _____

Student:_____

School & District:_____

Cooperating Teacher: _____

ACTIVITIES & STUDENT BEHAVIOR	COMMENTS

Signature _____

INTERNSHIP SUPERVISION

TY	NUMBER OF STUDENTS			NUMBER OF VISITS PER WEEK				
		WEEK	WEEK	WEEK	WEEK	WEEK	WEEK	WEEK

Figure 3

The University of Vermont

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION & CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT
WATERMAN BUILDING, BURLINGTON, VERMONT 05405

Dr. Mary McNeil Pierce
Professional Education and
Curriculum Development
533 Waterman Building
University of Vermont
Burlington, Vermont 05405

Dear Mary:

I want to bring each PECD faculty member up-to-date on our efforts to improve the level of internship supervision.

While quantitative measures such as those listed below do not necessarily reflect the character of the actual supervisory visit, they can be useful indices of our desire to support our students.

During the fall semester, PECD has 81 student teachers assigned to area schools. They are being supervised by 19 faculty from PECD.

As of October 28, 1983, 121 supervisory visits have been completed, as evidenced by the forms faculty have submitted.

My records indicate that you have responsibility for 2 interns, and that as of today you have completed a total of 5 visits to them.

I appreciate very much your efforts in student teacher supervision. We are engaged in demanding yet important work when we spend time in schools working with our undergraduates. A great deal of effort goes into these visits and they are often difficult to schedule, given the many other responsibilities each of us has. You should know that our presence in schools with our students is a highly visible response from the college and one much noted by school teachers and administrators. I will be providing weekly feedback for the remainder of the semester. Let's keep up the good work.

With Much Appreciation,

Russell M. Agne

Russell M. Agne
Chairperson

The University of Vermont
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION & CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT
WATERMAN BUILDING, BURLINGTON, VERMONT 05405

To PECD Faculty Supervising Interns,

Dear Mary:

This is my third letter of the semester to you reporting the status of intern supervision in the department. Our efforts continue to go extremely well. As of November 21, 1983, a total of 314 supervisory visits have been made by 19 faculty assigned to our 81 interns. Last week, during a meeting with Deans Abruscato and Tesconi to discuss faculty loads, I called attention to the systematic effort PECD faculty is making and has historically made to support student teachers. They were particularly pleased that we would be able to provide documentation of our efforts should it be needed to make the case for more realistic student-faculty ratios with UVM administration. They wanted me to tell you how excited they are with your efforts and encouraged a continuation of this reporting practice. It was clear that these efforts are in our best professional interest.

For purposes of updating you personally on your contribution to this effort, my records indicate that you are responsible for the supervision of 8 interns and that you have completed 25 visits as recorded on reporting forms submitted to me. Additional forms, now with four copy capability minus the messy carbon paper, can be obtained from Connie Palmisano in the department office. The new forms require a bit of pressure to print through properly, and pen has been recommended instead of pencil.

I would like to offer my reactions to the commentary on the forms I have read. The visit summaries suggest that interns are being informed of what aspects of their teaching are going well and what needs improvement; appropriate praise and encouragement is provided; evidence of follow-up on selected instructional skills is evident from visit to visit. With the help of Mary Pierce I have identified several categories of specific reporting to student teachers. These are listed below for your possible use in guicing the observational-teaching process..

Suggested Commentary for Student Teacher Observation Forms

*Praise instructional efforts, curriculum that is going well.
*Encourage continuing efforts the intern is making to improve areas of performance.
*Give clear statements of what to avoid when that kind of clarity can be explicitly made.
*Recommend the use of specific curriculum materials, linking the intern with resources you know about.
*Correct "bad habits" such as the popular, "O.K., O.K., O.K."
*Suggest techniques for solving tough instructional academic and behavioral problems...make professional recommendations.

In summary, your efforts in student teaching supervision this semester are appreciated. Let us try in the several short weeks that remain to give our students clear and specific suggestions on their performance so that they will be well appraised of their status before the final conference. Surprises at the final conferences are not likely to be well received.

Sincerely,

Russell M. Agne.
Chairperson
PECD

RMA:vw

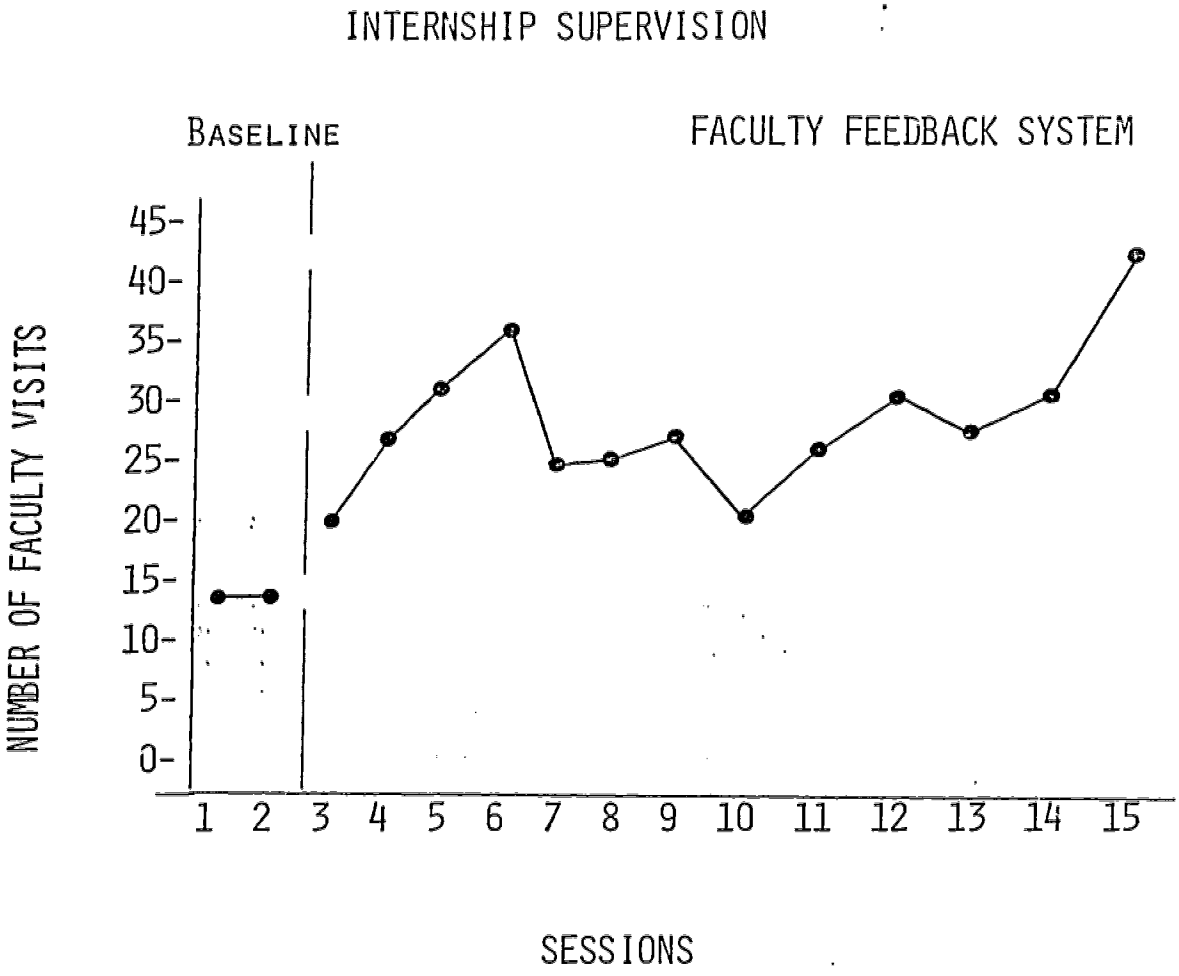
INTERNSHIP SUPERVISION
BASELINE
FACULTY FEEDBACK SYSTEM
NUMBER OF FACULTY VISITS
45-
40-
35-
30-
25-
20-
15-
10-
5-
0-
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
SESSIONS

Figure 5