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ABSTRACT

The Comprehensive Teacher Education Institute (CTEI) is a collaborative venture between the University of California (Riverside) and the Jurupa Unified School District whose goal is to improve the education of prospective teachers and increase the professional knowledge and personal esteem of experienced practitioners. In an effort to enhance the supervision of prospective teachers, CTEI developed and offered a course in supervision which stressed both theoretical models and practical applications of supervision. Participants in the course included school teachers and administrators, graduate students, and college faculty, all of whom were involved in the supervision of student teachers. A study was conducted to examine the extent to which the course increased the knowledge of university and school site personnel in the field of supervision and fostered extensive communication among diverse participants. The investigation drew from four sources of data: surveys administered during and at the conclusion of the course, course evaluations, interviews with student teachers, and informal observations. Findings show that: the course incorporated a model of shared leadership which appeared to increase levels of collegiality and respect; the course organization illuminated and reinforced the power of diversity; and the course structure offered an opportunity to recognize and legitimize the knowledge of practitioners. (IAH)

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# INCREASING COLLABORATION AND PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE THROUGH COURSE DEVELOPMENT: THE FORM FITS THE FUNCTION

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## Introduction

Little debate remains today that the condition of teacher education and the professional development of experienced teachers warrants serious attention. Federal commissions, state legislative task forces, private foundations and the research of individual scholars all identify the importance of producing and sustaining a professional teacher force (Carnegie, 1986; Holmes Group., 1986, 1990; Goodlad, 1990). An inability to educate new teachers and to sustain experienced teachers will doom all other educational reforms to failure. The Comprehensive Teacher Education Institute (CTEI), a collaborate venture between the University of California, Riverside and the Jurupa Unified School district, seeks to address this situation through an experimental project designed to improve the education of prospective teachers while increasing the professional knowledge and personal esteem of experienced practitioners.

This paper, centers on one aspect of the CTEI -- the impact of collaboration on the development of teachers' professional knowledge of effective supervision of novice teachers. In particular, it addresses the ways in which the professional development of teachers and university supervisors may be

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enhanced by participation in a university-based seminar to develop knowledge of supervision.

Student teaching, long identified by teachers and researchers as the most important element in professional education (Conant, 1963, Andrews, 1964), is criticized for "...lacking a theoretical and conceptual framework, for lacking commonly espoused goals, and for not fulfilling its potential" (Guyton and McIntyre, 1990, p. 515). In part, this incoherence reflects a lack of communication and articulation of common goals between faculty and staff of university teacher education programs and practitioners at the school site. As a result, student teachers often receive conflicting messages from their cooperating teachers and their university supervisors. Cooperating teachers typically are given the task of supervising a student teacher with little or no training or articulation with university supervisors.

An additional problem in the education and retention of teachers stems from the isolation that teachers frequently experience. For many practicing teachers, isolated working conditions limit the exchange of ideas and impede professional growth. Teachers working alone rely on their own ability to identify problems and solutions and tend to fall back on models that they recall from their own days as students (Rosenholtz, 1985). Prospective teachers also suffer from isolation. During the important student teaching and observation experiences, novices typically are placed in one classroom with one teacher.

Few opportunities are available for the novice and experienced teachers to interact, reflect and explore their practice with others.

To address these issues, CTEI adopted a number of strategies. These included teacher education course revision and reorganization within the university program; the development of new university courses stressing pedagogical content knowledge; seminars within academic fields at the school site; and the collaborative supervision and education of pre-service students at the school site. In an effort to enhance the supervision of prospective teachers, CTEI developed and offered a course in supervision based upon multiple models and reflecting the reality of the field. This paper focuses on this seminar and its impact on the participants.

## Setting and Context

The Comprehensive Teacher Education Institute at the University of California, Riverside represents a collaborative partnership involving the School of Education, selected academic departments at the university, Rubidoux High School, and the Riverside County Office of Education.

Rubidoux High School is a large, four year comprehensive high school in the Jurupa Unified School District about 70 miles East of Los Angeles. The diverse student population reflects that of many California schools, and the school community consists primarily of middle and low income families. Less than

ten percent of the graduating seniors at the school go on to post secondary education, with four percent enrolling in four year colleges or universities.

Collaboration with Rubidoux High School has been firmly established. Over 40 teachers at the school have participated in CTEI in various roles. Further, the administration has demonstrated its commitment to this collaboration by adapting the master schedule to allow a common planning period for teachers who serve as cooperating teachers, releasing teachers to serve on various committees, and assigning a permanent room at the school for professional development activities. The common planning time allows for a daily seminar at the school site for cooperating teachers and student teachers.

Course Development and Description

During the summer of 1989, Dr. Katherine Merseth, Director of the CTEI, developed a course syllabus on the supervision of novice teachers. Her research efforts, combined with interviews with the UC-Riverside Director of Teacher Education and current university supervisors, produced the outline of a new course that considered a number of theoretical models of supervision as well as techniques of counseling and classroom observation.

The purpose of this course was to increase the knowledge and awareness of university and school site personnel in the field of supervision. The overview of the course, as described on the syllabus, stated:

> This seminar will examine theoretical models of supervision and explore current research related to novice teachers. Through simulations, case study, discussions and focused group activities, participants will share knowledge of teacher development, counseling methods, and classroom observation techniques. (Syllabus, Spring, 1990, Page 1)

Because the project is dedicated to the concept of collaboration, CTEI sought participants in the course from the various constituencies involved in supervision. This included school practitioners from Rubidoux High School, university staff, and university graduate students. In particular the course syllabus stated:

> The seminar is open to career supervisors, doctoral students employed as supervisors, graduate students, and practitioners who have had or seek supervisory experience. (Syllabus, Spring, 1990, Page 1)

CTEI actively publicized the course in the Rubidoux and School of Education communities. To encourage the participation of classroom teachers, CTEI offered the course tuition free to the teachers, awarded them four units of graduate credit and paid them a $200 stipend for attending. These efforts resulted in the enrollment of twenty-six individuals during the spring quarter, 1990. The seminar met on Friday afternoons from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Participants in the class included 13 teachers and one administrator from Rubidoux High School, four graduate students with part-time supervisory responsibilities in the university teacher education program, five graduate students without current supervisory responsibilities, and three full-time career supervisors employed by the teacher education program. This

mixture of university-based personnel with teachers from Rubidoux High School challenged the traditional separation between the university and school sites and allowed program developers to examine the impact of the diverse backgrounds of participants on discussions and interactions.

## Methodology

This study examines the extent to which a university-based seminar increased the knowledge of university and school site personnel in the field of supervision and fostered extensive communication among diverse participants. The investigation draws from four sources of data: surveys administered during and at the conclusion of the course, course evaluations, interviews with student teachers and informal observations. The analysis of this data falls into two parts. The first examines the content of the course and its impact on the participants' supervisory knowledge and interaction with student teachers. The second analysis section examines certain organizational features of the seminar and the extent to which these aspects fostered respect and collaboration among participants.

## Findings: Course Content

The content of "The Supervision of Novice Teachers" course stressed both theoretical models and practical applications of supervision. The topics of the ten week seminar moved through an exploration of various conceptualizations of teaching and

supervision and what is known about beginning teachers, followed by a review of specific techniques related to classroom supervision. It concluded with an examination of possible policy and programmatic implications of supervision in secondary schools.

Specifically, the early sessions explored general orientations to teaching, supervision and novice teachers. The first session examined the context of teaching, and seminar participants offered personal interpretations of teaching. The second session looked at the multiple interpretations of the field of supervision (Sergiovani, 1982; Acheson and Gall, 1987). Participants shared their experiences with supervision, both from being supervised and being a supervisor. The third meeting examined current research about beginning teachers (Merseth, 1990), including developmental stages (Fuller, 1969), the influence of experience on the development of teacher role (Feiman-Nemser, 1975), and the perceived problems of novices (Veenman, 1984). In these sessions, participants debated the merits and disadvantages of a "sink or swim" model of induction (Varah et. al., 1986). This introductory portion of the course set the stage for a consideration of specific models of supervision. It also offered an opportunity for participants to identify and understand the differing perspectives of other seminar members.

The second section of the course examined two basic orientations of supervision: the scientific and the clinical

models. The scientific model of supervision (McNeil, 1982) draws its conceptual roots from the process-product interpretation of effective teaching (Gage, 1978; Brophy and Good, ). Participants analyzed the approach advocated by Madeline Hunter (Hunter, 1989) as a specific example of this form of supervision. The relative familiarity of teachers and university supervisors with this particular model afforded an in-depth exploration.

The clinical model of supervision offered a contrasting supervisory framework (Acheson and Gall, 1987; Goldhammer, Anderson, and Krajewski, 1980). This portion of the course explored peer coaching (Costa and Garmston, 1985) as an example of supervision utilizing many clinical supervision assumptions. Because participants were less familiar with this model, more seminar time was devoted to the particular techniques and characteristics associated with this approach. In particular, seminar members focused on techniques related to the gathering of observational data and the analysis of collected data. Participants also explored specific approaches for conducting feedback conferences and possible barriers to successful conferencing (Acheson and Gall, 1987; Goldhammer et. al., 1980).

The last section of the course helped participants create their own model of supervision and place that model in their individual programmatic and policy framework. These sessions devoted particular attention to the relationship of collegiality and the social organization of schools (Little, 1982; Rosenholtz,

1989) to the induction of novices to the profession (Zeichner and Liston, 1987).

To provide one measure of the participants' growth of knowledge of supervision, a pre-post evaluation was administered after a three hour session on the Madeline Hunter model of supervision. Prior to the seminar, participants ranked their knowledge of, practice with, and general feelings of support for the Hunter model on a 5 point Likert scale. The results of this survey (see Table I) indicate that most participants had initial familiarity with the model and some experience with it. This result reflects the dominance of this model in both the school district and university teacher education program in the geographic area. However, relative to their knowledge and experience, participants indicated less support for the model. Indeed, many teachers expressed a strong dislike of the approach, describing it as "forced organization of lessons," "rigid and unresponsive to the 'teaching moment,'" "not what is as cracked up to be" and "over-used and abused" (Participant in-class comments, April 13, 1990).

TABLE I

Mean scores on 5 point scale
(1 = none 5 = greatest)
n = 20

| | Before Discussion | After Discussion |
|---|---|---|
| Knowledge of the Hunter Model | 3.7 | 4.1 |
| Practice with Hunter Model | 3.3 | 3.4 |
| Support for Hunter Model | 2.9 | 2.9 |

Following the seminar discussion and related activities, participants completed the instrument again. This second set of responses indicated a significant increase in knowledge about the model, with only a slight increase in experience with the model. Support for the model did not increase but stayed at the same level as before the seminar discussion. This result suggests that participants in a seminar do not just accept a new technique simply because they learn more about it; indeed, increased knowledge doesn't always produce increased support.

As an additional measure of changes in knowledge of supervision, seminar members evaluated the use of various course materials and pedagogical techniques at the conclusion of the seminar. Table II indicates the extent to which participants suggested more, about the same, or less use of specific materials and strategies.

Table II
Percentage Response
n = 13

| | More | Same | Less |
|---|---|---|---|
| Assigned Readings | --- | 62 | 38 |
| Papers (n=12) | 8 | 92 | 0 |
| Case Discussions | 77 | 23 | 0 |
| Role Playing (n=12) | 17 | 75 | 8 |
| Practice with Techniques | 53 | 47 | 0 |
| Class Meeting Time | 15 | 85 | 0 |

These data indicate a general satisfaction with materials and pedagogical techniques in the course, although participants clearly preferred increasing the use of case discussions (Merseth, 1991). During the seminar, two sessions incorporated case studies which centered on issues of supervision. The first case " How Come, Ms Cabot" stressed common problems encountered by novice teachers (Merseth, 1990) while the second focused on issues of collegiality and support for novice teachers within a department (Merseth, 1989). One difficulty with increasing the use of case discussions is the paucity of high quality case materials in the field of teacher education and supervision.

Participants also felt the course should include more opportunities to practice supervisory techniques. Participants wanted more time to practice and develop supervisory skills. This concern reflects the requirements of their assignments as cooperating teachers or university supervisors. Since most of the participants supervise student teachers as a part of their responsibilities, developing expertise in new supervisory techniques has direct applicability to their daily work.

Although the participants requested more practice with techniques, they did not hesitate to try new techniques in their work with student teachers. Interviews with student teachers at the conclusion of the quarter identified a clear change in the feedback they received from their cooperating teachers:

> "When my cooperating teacher first started observing me, he would say what was good and then give some suggestions. Then when he started taking that seminar, he would do different things. . . . I thought it was

> more helpful and fun. And I wasn't as nervous when he was evaluating me." (Student Teacher #2)

The exposure to new models and strategies also apparently increased the cooperating teachers' abilities to tailor their observations and feedback to specific concerns of the student teachers. For example, one student teacher expressed concern about the group activities she was attempting with her students. She reported that the students in one group didn't seem to be working well together. In response, the cooperating teacher utilized a sociogram/classroom mapping technique presented and practiced in the seminar to gather and analyze data on the productive and non-productive comments in the class. In another instance, a student teacher reported that she received specific feedback from her cooperating teacher on her over-attention and focus on the students on one side of the room. The schematic diagram produced by the cooperating teacher from his observation provided a clear picture of the classroom interactions to the novice.

Findings: Course Organization

The "Supervision of Novice Teachers" course was a university-based seminar with three hour meetings once a week for ten weeks. However, within this structure, participants assumed partial responsibility for the content and delivery of the material in each session. The syllabus stated:

> Seminar Responsibility--Seminar members will take responsibility for at least one meeting of the class. This responsibility will include facilitating class

> discussions and activities, consulting with the instructor and preparing an outline of the readings for that session for other seminar members. Participants will have an opportunity to select one or two seminars for this assignment.

Rather than having individual responsibility, participants worked in small groups composed of a school practitioner and a university supervisor or graduate student.

The course incorporated this model of "shared leadership" for three reasons. First, one purpose of the course was to build collegial working relationships and to foster mutual respect among the university and school-based educators. Shared leadership served as a way of reducing the isolation and increasing the interaction experienced by both university and school-site participants. Second, this structure recognized the extant knowledge represented by participants in the seminar. Participants' supervisory experience ranged from no prior experience to supervision of more than 100 beginning teachers. Finally, the structure sought to communicate a seriousness of purpose. Busy university personnel and school teachers want to know that their participation is important and valued. This structure underscored the importance of each person's full participation.

The shared leadership feature of the course appeared to increase levels of collegiality and respect. Perhaps uncertain about the course organization at the beginning of the quarter, participants enthusiastically supported the notion of shared leadership by the end of the seminar.

In surveys, participants reported that the shared leadership feature fostered a collaborative environment. For example, one seminar member noted that "...the idea is wonderful because it promotes collegiality, makes a statement that everyone in the class has something to offer, and diverges from the lecture format; it also forces us to 'invest' in the course" (Participant survey #1). Another observed that the structure created "more work but it created a collaborative mechanism for teaching and learning...the aim of this class. The form fit the function!" (Participant survey #2).

The increase in collegiality became apparent throughout the course simply by watching the seating arrangements. At the first class session, participants sat in three distinct groups: high school teachers, university supervisors, and university graduate students. As the quarter progressed, the groups dissolved and participants voluntarily mixed. Distinct groups were no longer visible.

Additionally, the shared leadership feature of the course influenced the participants not only in their interactions in the seminar but also within their primary work settings. For instance, teachers who previously had little or no contact with teachers outside their department began to approach colleagues about interdisciplinary curriculum and strategies. One university supervisor (at a school other than Rubidoux High School) organized a discussion group in an attempt to increase teachers' opportunities for dialogue about educational topics.

The course organization also illuminated and reinforced the power of diversity. For example, one seminar member noted that this approach "...allowed for several viewpoints to the topic" (Participant survey # 9). Another participant suggested that "It was effective ...[because] each group handled their assignment differently yet creatively, which gave a richer texture to our sessions" (Participant survey # 4). The diversity expanded the perspectives of the participants, enriching their understanding.

Finally, the course structure offered an opportunity to recognize and legitimize the knowledge of practitioners. One participant observed: "I found this to be very effective since there are so many individuals with such vast means [in the course]" (Participant survey # 7). Another commented that "In a class such as ours where everyone had a rather considerable level of experience and education, shared responsibility was the only way to go" (Participant survey # 12).

The data indicate that the organization of the course successfully recognized and utilized the extant knowledge of the participants, exposed multiple and sometimes diverse perspectives, and occasionally created modest competition among the members -- "The groups vied to be creative and provide exciting classes" (Participant survey # 12, emphasis added). The data suggest that the shared leadership structure supported the original goal of the course to foster collegial relationships among diverse participants.

The analysis also illustrates the importance of having different groups -- university-based supervisors, doctoral students and high school teachers -- together in the course. In a concluding survey, a number of participants commented directly on the quality of the dialogue. For example, one stated, "I found it particularly valuable to have a course primarily composed of both 'practiced' professionals and the research/education community. Great context for dialogue" (Survey response # 3, emphasis original). Another suggested, "the makeup of the class (very heterogeneous) was most helpful for the topics under discussion" (Survey response # 4, emphasis original).

Other evidence of the developing respect among the participants was the number who expressed an interest in continuing the experience. When asked whether they would like to continue the discussions of the course and other topics of teacher education in an ongoing study group, thirteen seminar members decided that they would like to participate. The group planned to meet periodically to discuss provocative educational articles and topics.

## Summary

This study, examining the content and organizational structure of a university-based course "Supervision of the Novice Teacher," illustrates several important findings for those involved in the professional development of teachers. First,

this preliminary study confirms the power and importance of creating opportunities for dialogue. Within schools, teachers' opportunities for interaction are limited, and communication tends to be informal and infrequent (Corcoran, 1988). School personnel and university based educators have even fewer occasions to engage in meaningful conversations that focus specifically on educational practice. Engaging in a common agenda or working toward a common goal such as increased knowledge of supervision is an important component of successful teacher education.

Second, this research suggests that it is important to provide substantive information to those who are embarking on newly defined or recently altered roles. The teachers and supervisors in this course wanted to provide excellent supervision to novice teachers. Many, however, professed inadequate training in the field of supervision and sought an opportunity to increase their knowledge and development of skills.

Third, the experience with this course suggests the importance in collaborative ventures of bringing parties together in situations where the differing expertise and perspective of each is recognized, required and valued. The notion of shared leadership in the structure of the seminar provided an excellent opportunity to recognize various forms of knowledge residing within the multiple constituencies of teacher education. Participants came to recognize the different "cultures" and

constraints of each constituency. Similarly, they also identified the common ground between them.

Designing a course where "the form fits the function" appears to be an excellent vehicle to foster successful professional development opportunities for individuals dedicated to the improved education of teachers.