

Clinical Teaching Analysis: A Procedure for Supervising Teachers

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"It is difficult to obtain an accurate measurement when you use a rubber yardstick" - Anon. (Allen, 1979). Are we using a "rubber yardstick" in our teacher education programs when it comes to measuring student teacher performance? Some contend we are.

The performance of hundreds of student teachers is evaluated through some type of supervisory approach annually. This evaluation by the local school cooperating teacher and the university supervising teacher often becomes the basis for recommending or not recommending the student teacher for certification. Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on one's viewpoint, cooperating teachers and university supervisors too often blithely weave their way through the supervision and evaluation process - often to the consternation and detriment of those being supervised and evaluated (Allen, 1979).

The Problem

Many local teachers perform major roles in the professional development of student teachers. Known by such titles as critic, cooperating, master, resident, helping and training teachers, they provide student teachers with experiences necessary for a beginning teaching proficiency. The local cooperating teachers have continually raised questions about their responsibility in such a supervisory capacity, seeking clarification of the behavioral roles they must assume as supervisors. Additionally, university personnel, charged with the responsibility to coordinate the student teaching experience, have often raised questions concerning the continuity of purpose and supervisory strategies cooperating teachers have previously followed. With such a variety of approaches to supervision of student teachers, one must ask if student teachers are being effectively supervised.

Because of the diverse approaches to the supervision of student teachers, the purpose of this article is to identify the basic roles of the cooperating teacher and outline a systematic approach for supervising student teachers.

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Role Statements

One answer to the problem is that as supervisors, local teachers stress the development of the teacher-to-be as a self-directing, creating teacher with ideas of his/her own (Lortie, 1975). According to Lucio and McNeil (1979), the desired roles of local school supervising teachers are as follows:

1. To help the beginning teacher find purpose in learning.
2. To further the beginning teacher's sensitivity to individual students and the dynamics of the classroom.
3. To enable the beginning teacher to vitalize instruction.
4. To give the student teacher a view of teaching as learning.
5. To influence the student teacher to act professionally.

In addition to these general role statements, most agriculture education teacher education programs provide the cooperating teachers with handbooks which identify various activities the student teacher needs to complete. No doubt, most cooperating teachers try to follow these guidelines and assist the student teacher in completing the required activities. However, a student teacher handbook is no substitute for a clear-cut systematic strategy for supervising student teachers within the role framework identified by Lucio and McNeil (1979).

The Answer: Clinical Teaching Analysis

If cooperating teachers are to be effective in helping student teachers develop to their fullest potential, a systematic approach to supervision appears most effective (Martin, 1981). This system should be based on clear communication, with the student teachers receiving written feedback on a continual basis. This feedback should allow the student teachers to reflect on their development and critically analyze their teaching.

Clinical teaching analysis is based on the following 10 step procedure which was validated, field tested (Martin, 1981), and is being used by the authors:

1. Prior to the student teaching experience, the student teacher should meet with the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor for the express purpose of outlining supervisory procedures. This step is essential because it clarifies for all concerned parties just how the student teacher will be supervised, how feedback will be provided, and on what basis evaluation will occur. The purpose of this conference is to clarify the agenda.

2. At least two to three days prior to formal observation, the university supervisors and cooperating teachers should review the student teacher's specific plans for teaching for the day of the formal observation. The purpose of this review is to allow the observer to grasp an understanding of the intentions of the student teacher and how the specific plans fit into the overall program.
3. The student teacher should write and submit lesson plans that reflect four distinct components as addressed by the following questions:
 - a) What are the objectives of the lesson?
 - b) What teaching strategies will be used, and how will they be used with the given content?
 - c) How will the students be involved?
 - d) How will the teacher know the objectives have been achieved?
4. The student teacher should conduct a pre-observation conference with the cooperating teacher and/or university supervisor to discuss the lesson plan. The questions raised in the previous step should be raised and satisfactorily answered. This process allows the student teachers and local supervising teacher to reflect on the plans, and adjustments in the plan may be made prior to teaching the lesson.
5. The cooperating teacher/university supervisor should encourage the student teacher to identify what he/she wants to be the focus of the observation. Initially, the observer may need to offer suggestions, but as the student teacher gains experience, he/she should be able to identify different aspects of the teaching process and should specifically be observed and evaluated.
6. The cooperating teacher/university supervisor should observe the teaching as agreed upon and identified during the pre-observation conference.
7. The student teacher should meet with the cooperating teacher/university supervisor at the end of the class/day to discuss the teacher observed. Four basic questions should be asked in addition to any observation items agreed upon during the pre-observation conference:
 - a) Were the objectives accomplished? Why or why not?
 - b) Did the strategies work? Why or why not?
 - c) Did the students get involved? Why or why not?
 - d) Did the evaluation reflect what was learned? Why or why not?

8. The student teacher should receive and review a copy of the evaluation instrument for each observation. He/she should reflect on what is being done and how to make adjustments, if needed. It might be best to start with one or two areas of concentration for improvement instead of overloading the student with many items upon which to improve.
9. The student teacher and the observer should come to some conclusion and agreement as to the follow-up procedures that will be used to correct any weaknesses and enhance any strengths.
10. The student teacher and the observer should resume planning for the next observation.

Discussion

The cooperating teachers and student teachers formulate questions at the outset. In what ways should pupils be different after their experiences in the class? What should they know and be able to do as a result of instruction? Through such questions, local supervising teachers and student teachers together formulate a "sense of direction" and an overall plan for the student teaching experience. Early in the student teaching experience, the clinical teaching analysis procedure actively involves both the local cooperating teacher and the student teacher in a "team approach" to student teaching. This early planning suggests tentative statements of expected outcomes for pupils and proposes the kinds of evidence which will serve as indices of goal attainment.

Another question to raise is, "How is the class getting along?" Evaluation of the progress of students enables the student teachers to focus upon individuals, making them aware of the different rates and different means by which students learn. Student teachers are encouraged to take advantage of personal conversations with individual students and to contribute to group problem-solving in an effort to communicate with all. In this way, student teachers will perceive themselves as learners with students. The student teacher focuses upon a "student-centered" rather than a "teacher-centered" approach to teaching.

Instruction becomes effective through continuous specific attention to techniques associated with organizing materials, arranging room environment, giving instruction and demonstrations, conducting discussions, constructing evaluative measures and the like. Instruction becomes efficient after the cooperating and student teachers see and discuss profound and universal questions which are present in the daily events of the classroom. Such questions include the following:

- What situations will cause the class to feel it necessary to engage in the planned educational activity?
- What problem areas and sequential activities are most appropriate?
- What student activities are involved?
- What will be the results?
- What instruction must be presented before the class can do these things?
- What resources and details should be considered?

A local cooperating teacher discussing these and similar questions enhances the student teacher's desire to "think through" the total instructional approach. In essence, there is a complete clinical analysis of teaching.

It has often been said that one never arrives in teaching. So complex is the task of working with unique personalities in ever-changing classes that the teacher must continue to propose and test new approaches. In a clinical teaching analysis approach, the student teacher realizes that effective experienced teachers develop original plans with each class. Through reflection and joint probing, the student teacher and cooperating teacher can extract the full meaning of the experience and develop strategies to deal with different situations. The security of the cooperating teacher makes possible the acceptance of differences which may exist. The cooperating teacher knows that good can come from these differences. Warm human relations grow out of productive conflicts, since the improvement and resolution of disagreement centers upon the progress of students.

Potential Problems

It must be emphasized that any attempt to change an educational norm or a pattern of behavior has potential dangers. However, this in itself is no reason to "throw in the towel." Habits, procedures, and attitudes are not easily changed, regardless of the commitment to a goal.

Sergiovanni and Starratt (1971) suggest that when supervisors face a problem, their approach, behavior, or style is largely affected by each of the following internalized forces: value system, confidence in others, leadership inclinations, and feelings of security in an uncertain situation. The cooperating teacher has an awesome responsibility. Indeed, the choice of one supervisory pattern over another is partly a function of forces in the client to be supervised, but this rationale should not provide a convenient "out" for those whose dominant supervisory patterns fall outside the range of clinical supervision (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1971). It must be recognized that forces in the client may require the supervisor to behave in a variety of ways. Highly dependent student teachers may need paternalistic supervisory environments. However, to merely acknowledge

the fact and resign to be paternalistic is not likely to lead to student teacher growth. With the acknowledgement, an effective clinical supervising teacher will help to diminish dependence and help the student teacher to grow; i.e., to learn more about "self."

Time will undoubtedly be a major concern of a number of local cooperating teachers in carrying out the clinical teaching analysis model. However, we all know a number of former student teachers who have indicated they did not receive what they regarded as sufficient supervision in their student teaching experience.

Other potential problems center around anxiety, language, defensiveness, and purpose of supervision. However, these potential trouble spots can be handled if the proper climate is established at the outset of the student teaching experience. Establishment of this climate should form the basis for the discussion prior to the student teaching experience. This area of concern could perhaps be the most difficult. The chance for growth and development of the cooperating teacher and student teacher in the process is well worth the effort. To do nothing indicates educators are satisfied with the status quo. To be satisfied may indicate stagnation. An attempt at clinical teaching analysis may be a beginning toward more effective student teacher supervision and, in turn, more effective instruction and learning.

Summary

Supervision of student teachers represents an important responsibility. The success of the supervision and the success of the individual student teacher depends, to a very great extent, upon the general supervisory climate in the department and on the educational leadership abilities of the cooperating teacher. Without the proper climate, supervision is nothing more than a ritual. Clinical teaching analysis provides the framework for effective supervision. The cooperating teacher and the student teacher must provide the commitment to the process and the desired results.

Student teachers tend to model their cooperating teachers (Shadle, 1980). Cooperating teachers should provide situations where new teachers can themselves discover and take proper action. Cooperating teachers should encourage originality and modification of belief and practice in terms of each student teacher's own individuality.

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