

Advancing Supervision in Clinically-Based Teacher Education

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Abstract

For this special issue, *Advancing Supervision in Clinically-Based Teacher Education*, we invited conceptual papers, empirical research studies, descriptive narratives, and evaluations of supervision from faculty, emerging scholars, professionals, and practitioners situated in teacher preparation contexts. The papers included illuminate how supervision in clinical teacher education is being improved, studied, or developed.

Keywords

clinical teacher education; university-based field supervision; pre-service teacher education

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Introduction

Teacher education programs are increasingly concerned with the quality of the clinical component of their curricula, particularly the supervision that teacher candidates receive (AACTE, 2018; Bates, Drits, & Ramirez, 2011). Yet, those who carry out this clinical supervision – university-based field/clinical supervisors -- are often marginalized in teacher education and in the supervision literature. In their recent analysis of the complexity of pre-service teacher supervision, Burns and Badiali (2016) conclude that supervisors “may be the most undervalued actors in the entire teacher preparation equation when one considers the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they must have to teach about teaching in the field” (p. 156).

The objective of this special themed issue is to advance the body of research on supervision in clinically-based teacher education by (1) sharing innovative approaches to supporting the professional learning of supervisors, (2) highlighting how supervisory roles are shifting the teacher education landscape, (3) describing how supervisors are developing their knowledge, skills and practices, and (4) exploring research that examines supervisor impact on teacher learning. This special issue bridges the supervision and clinical teacher education literature in order to illuminate how we support university-based clinical supervisors in their critical role of guiding teacher development.

For this special issue, *Advancing Supervision in Clinically-Based Teacher Education*, five papers are presented that touch upon varied aspects of supervision in the teacher education context, and each illuminates how supervision is being improved, studied, or developed. In the opening piece, D. John McIntyre and Christie McIntyre provide a historical grounding that reminds us of the persistent and important relationship supervision has had with field-based teacher education. They orient us to the need for continued support for collaborative relationships such as those between institutions of teacher education and K-12 schools as key sites for clinical supervision to grow and evolve.

In the second article, Sarah Capello exposes the realities of how supervisors are often positioned in their roles--that is, that they are not well-positioned and receive minimal training. This neglect leads to reliance on past K-12 teaching or supervisory experiences without the opportunity for supervisor development. She highlights the need for teacher education programs to recognize supervisory identity and nurture by supervisors' development.

Picking up the findings from Capello's study, in which supervisors primarily relied on peers for support for their work, *Scaffolding Development of Clinical Supervisors* showcases five university supervisors' experiences as they collaborated through self-study. Authors Jennifer Snow, Hannah Carter, Sherry A. Dismuke, Angel Larson, and Stefanie Shebley shed light from the insider's point of view on the challenges and concerns of navigating teacher supervision within the boundaries of their roles as supervisors in the third article.

In the fourth article, Megan Guise, Sarah Hegg, Briana Ronan, Tanya Flushman, and Billie-Jo Grant offer a way forward with their focus on purposeful professional development designed for clinical supervisors. Their paper shares an initiative in which supervisors focused on how their feedback could specifically support teacher candidates working with emergent bilingual learners.

This type of study provides a glimpse of the direction of the field and how essential and impactful intentional supervision can be for teacher learning.

Finally, Rebecca Buchanan provides a framework that goes far to explain the power and institutional dynamics at work in clinical teacher education, dynamics which cause much of the tensions described in the previous articles. While she focuses on cooperating teachers within the triad of supervision (student teacher-supervisor-cooperating teacher), she employs an ecological approach that provides us with a distance that helps us see each player's constraints and opportunities within a system.

The fields of instructional supervision and school leadership, as well as those interested in teacher development at all stages can find much relevance in these authors' contributions. Questions that continue to deserve exploration include:

- What oversight do supervisors receive? How is "well-supervised" defined and its impact measured?
- How can professional development be differentiated and reciprocal to capture the strengths of supervisors with different backgrounds?
- How are alternative programs innovating in advancing the quality of supervisors and the practice of supervision to prepare high quality educators?
- What can teacher education learn from allied fields with mature research bases on supervision, such as nursing, counseling, medicine, and social work?
- How can educational leadership programs inform the practices of educator preparation in the area of instructional supervision?

We look forward to sharing the articles in this special issue with you and to continuing to recognize and enhance the essential contributions made by clinical supervisors in teacher education.

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Author Biographies

Laura Baecher is Associate Professor of TESOL at Hunter College, City University of New York. Her research focuses on teacher education to serve English language learners, including teacher leadership, the use of video for teacher learning, and practicum and supervision.

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