Title: Student-faculty Interactions: An underemphasized dimension of counselor education.

Subject(s): COUNSELORS -- Supervision of; INTERACTION analysis in education

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Source: Counselor Education & Supervision, Dec93, Vol. 33 Issue 2, p80, 9p

Abstract: Explores accreditation standards, ethical codes, and literature on counselor educator and student interactions. Potential research issues; Counselor supervision; Concerns and directions for counselor educators.

AN: 9409260088

ISSN: 0011-0035

Persistent link to this record: http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=9409260088&db=aph

Database: Academic Search Premier

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Section: current issues

STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTIONS: AN UNDEREMPHASIZED DIMENSION OF COUNSELOR EDUCATION

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Counselor Supervision
Accreditation standards, ethical codes, and literature on counselor educator and student interactions are explored. Potential research issues are suggested, and the impact of this information on programs is considered.

A recent follow-up study of counselor education master's degree graduates cited interaction with faculty as the most meaningful aspect of the program (Oliver, Moore, Schoen, & Scarmon, 1990). Such a strong finding would lead one to believe that additional research and theory would be available on the types and characteristics of student and faculty interactions. Unfortunately, attempts to find additional counselor education research on faculty and student interactions, student expectations, or even student assessments of their programs produced little information. The related topics of how faculty actually do act and theoretically should act and react to students have also received little attention in the counseling profession. Counselor educators wishing to expand their knowledge and improve their skills in these areas would not find the necessary support in the literature. This article includes a review of information found in accreditation standards, ethical codes, related literature, and a discussion of the implications for the future of counselor education.

Counseling journals, newsletters, and books offer little information on how counselor education programs attend to the experience, maturity, needs, and professional potential of counselor education students (Gustitus, Golden, & Hazier, 1986; Killacky & Hulse-Killacky, 1991). Part of the reason for this lack of recognition of student qualities and needs might be traced to positions taken by Carl Rogers (1969) more than 20 years ago. Rogers suggested that psychologists and educators may not effectively recognize or use student qualities because of seeing them as "manipulable objects, not as persons" (p. 183). More recently, Gross (1991) commented that Rogers's concerns may be just as true today.

Kottler (1992) discussed the possibility that counselor educators' interactions with students could actually be viewed as hypocritical. "To what extent are we demonstrating in our teaching styles and characteristic ways of interacting with students, clients, supervisees, and colleagues the exact qualities we claim are so crucial to developing trust and interpersonal influence?" (p. 476). Kottler's concern that we may not practice with students what we teach receives a form of support from interviews conducted by Heppner, Wright, and Berry (1990) with some of the most respected pioneers in our profession. In these interviews, leaders like Merle Ohlsen, E. G. Williamson, Gilbert Wrenn, and others spoke of a potential need for a greater focus on student independence, creativity, initiative, and curiosity as well as faculty mentoring. They also noted that little empirical research is available to direct such efforts.

The counseling profession's ethical guidelines and program accreditation standards are examined first to identify the attention they give to student empowerment and student-faculty interaction. Because little research is available that specifically looks at counselor education programs and student-faculty interactions, research from other professional fields is highlighted to demonstrate the type of information appropriate for counselor education research and application. The implications of this information are considered in an attempt to clarify future directions for research, theory development, and practice.

**PROGRAM ACCREDITATION AND STUDENT-FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS**

The degree to which counselor education programs confirm and direct the role of faculty member as systematic planner and provider of student-faculty relationships should be visible in the basic accreditation standards of our profession. Content of the accreditation standards
for the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 1993) require faculty to hold a doctorate in counselor education, to have relevant professional experience, to hold membership in professional organizations, to attend professional meetings, to do research, and to provide service (Section IV, D & E, pp. 55-56). Similar requirements for training or experience that specify teaching or student relationship skills are not included.

Students are expected to have "a faculty advisor at all times during enrollment" (Section V, P, p. 60). No mention is made, however, of advisor duties, qualities, or skills. No additional mention of student-faculty relationship style or opportunities is made in the core requirements. The doctoral standards do state that "doctoral students collaborate with program faculty in teaching, supervision, counseling practice, research, professional writing, and service" (Doctoral Standards, E, p. 34). The terms advise and collaborate (for doctoral students only) are given no additional clarification regarding how to implement or evaluate effective student-faculty relationships.

The CACREP Standards' section on Evaluation (1993) provides general guidance on the assessment of students, programs, and faculty. In this section, it is stated that students will be evaluated regularly on academic performance, professional development, and personal development (Section VI, B, p. 61). Programs are to be evaluated by graduates (Section VI, C2, p. 61) and current students are expected to evaluate "faculty and the curricular experiences in which they participate" (Section VI, E, p. 61). Counselor educator advising or collaboration practices also mentioned in other portions of the standards are not targeted specifically for evaluation.

**ETHICAL GUIDELINES ON STUDENT-FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS**

The Ethical Standards of the Association for Counseling and Development (AACD, now the American Counseling Association [ACA]) (AACD, 1988) provide some guidance on student-faculty relationship responsibilities. Subsection H deals specifically with counselor preparation standards. In these standards, faculty are held responsible for "continual student evaluation and appraisal" of "personal limitations of the learner that might impede further performance" (Section H5). This is of great importance because self-understanding is one of three major directions identified for counselor education training programs (Section H3). Also, the position is taken that "forms of learning focusing on self-understanding or growth are voluntary;" furthermore, where such experiences are offered, members "must have no administrative, supervisory, or evaluating authority regarding the participant" (Section H12). Because counselor educators have a continuing evaluative role regarding the student, their involvement may not be appropriate in these voluntary program aspects. The type and degree of conflict in these areas are debatable and identifying professional forums for those debates seems to be an appropriate goal.

Ethical Standards (AACD, 1988) state that counselor educators "must be skilled as teachers and practitioners" (Section H9) and also that ACA "members must gather data on their effectiveness and be guided by the findings" (Section A1). There is, however, no mention of clarifying or evaluating the teaching skills specific to counselor education. That is, the guidelines recognize the need for the skills, but stop short of establishing the specifics of the skills and how one is to acquire them. Thus the Standards seem to be clear and forceful on counselors and counseling but less so with counselor education.

**STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS**
Both accreditation and ethical standards provide general support for the responsibility of members to initiate evaluation of their work. Related research on client satisfaction with counselors and their clients does, in fact, appear frequently in the literature. On the other hand, there are no corresponding data on satisfaction of students with programs or their relationships with counselor educators. Therefore, the following information summarizes student satisfaction literature in other areas of higher education because so little is available in the counseling literature. It is hoped that this information can identify key concepts and provide a framework for areas of discussion and further research in the counselor education field.

Student satisfaction has been found to influence several educational outcome factors and all levels of educational experience (Pascarella, 1980), including academic performance (Bean & Bradley, 1984). Students who are satisfied with their programs and faculty are more likely to be successful whether they are undergraduate or graduate students. Research by Feild and Giles (1980) on graduate business students and by Powers and Rossman (1985) on graduate education students found three common factors significantly related to student satisfaction: (a) professor-student interaction, (b) intellectual stimulation of instruction, and (c) student participation in determining school policies. Hearn’s (1985) studies of graduating seniors from a variety of majors provided additional support for the relationship between student satisfaction, faculty actions, and overall program evaluation. These findings emphasized the importance of student-faculty relationships in determining student satisfaction and achievement.

**STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTIONS**

In general, student satisfaction has been studied also regarding the more specific impact of interactions with individual faculty. Neumann and Neumann (1981) found strong ties between the actions of faculty, student satisfaction, and the academic success of students in their studies of undergraduates from the United States and Israel. These studies identified four individual faculty factors that influenced student satisfaction and academic performance in course work: presentations and lectures, tests and assignments, human relations of professors, and techniques of teaching.

Social support by students, faculty, and others often has been noted as another essential component of student satisfaction (Feild & Giles, 1980; Hearn, 1985; Neumann & Neumann, 1981; Powers & Rossman, 1985). The graduate student educational environment is also determined in part by the amount and quality of student-faculty relationships (Bargar & Mayo-Chamberlain, 1983). The same literature supports the fact that graduate students are often disappointed in the quality and level of their environment, and the amount of their interactions with faculty.

A student's academic persistence, defined as the ability to continue when difficulties are experienced, is one particularly strong indicator of student satisfaction (Tinto, 1975). Effective student-faculty interaction promotes this persistence in students and the common reaction by professionals that one or more particular faculty members’ encouragement and support pushed them to new heights or kept them moving during difficult times (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1978, 1979).

Pascarella's research (1980) established a relationship between informal student-faculty interaction and additional personal variables including career aspirations, intellectual development, and personal development. Another study emphasized that the more informal interaction students have with faculty, the more likely they are to be influenced by them (Wilson et al., 1975). The results of one study specifically suggested that informal contacts may have significantly more influence on educational outcomes than the more often
recognized formal ones (Endo & Harpel, 1982).

The authors of several studies emphasized the effect of informal student-faculty contact on the lives of faculty members as well as students. Faculty members with high levels of out-of-class contact with students seem more likely to "take pride in their work and to derive intrinsic enjoyment from their teaching" (Wilson, Woods, & Gaff, 1974, p. 88). Snow (1973) reported that faculty making more contacts showed a greater level of interest in students beyond the classroom, and their discussions were more far-ranging and less confined to their discipline. They spent considerably more time discussing the intellectual interests of the students, career options, and student personal problems. They also saw such relationships as interactional rather than only formal and professional.

The research on student-faculty interaction has demonstrated beneficial effects on many types of students. There seems to be a connection between informal out-of-class interactions and faculty behaviors in class (Wilson et al., 1974). These interactions have been shown to have a positive effect on the "value-related outcomes and [they have] mediated the (negative) effects of college environments" (Endo & Harpel, 1982, p. 133). Additionally, informal interactions seem to promote positive faculty feelings about their work, which would likely benefit themselves, their students, and their profession.

Counselor Supervision

Counselor supervision, as opposed to classroom instruction and other student-faculty relationships, is the one area of counselor education where the learning process and the student-faculty relationship have received attention. An exploration of the literature in this area may give some process and content direction to future study of other student-faculty relationships.

A 10-year review of counselor supervision literature found that it remains hard to define the ideal supervisor but that several consistent characteristics are identifiable (Carifio & Hess, 1987). Communicating high levels of facilitative conditions (i.e., empathy, genuineness) is a common starting place for effective supervisors as it is for most other facilitative relationships. Obtaining extensive counseling experience, setting clear and specific goals, avoiding therapy with students, being supportive and noncritical, and effectively using feedback were also found to surface regularly in the literature reviewed by Carifio and Hess. Furthermore, Borders’s (1991) review found that experienced supervisors were likely to be more active in teaching and sharing behaviors than novices. The results of these studies may be tempered because some authors of counselor supervision studies may have ignored related and available literature in sister professions (Bernard & Goodyear, 1991) thereby reducing their potential quality and impact.

Earlier research demonstrated that several supervisor factors have been found not only to be ineffective, but also to produce negative consequences. Laissez-faire and authoritarian styles of supervision are among the least effective approaches to supervision (Cherniss & Egnatios, 1977). Kagan (1983) also found that supervisors trying to affirm their expertise, encouraging student admiration, and seeing supervision as tedious work were less helpful.

Supervision must provide enjoyment and satisfaction for both the supervisor and trainee if it is to be maximally effective (Kagan, 1983). This is in part because supervisors are role models who serve to socialize counselors in training into the profession (Bernard & Goodyear, 1991). Self-evaluation is also important in this context as a means of promoting growth and assessing the quality of supervision (Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982). Therefore, the nature of the supervisor-counselor in training relationship seems to affect
directly the satisfaction with and quality of the experience as well as the growth of the student.

**CONCERNS AND DIRECTIONS FOR COUNSELOR EDUCATORS**

It seems safe to say that the counseling profession is built on skills related to both formal and informal interpersonal interactions. All legitimate counselor education programs provide extensive training in these skills. State licensing agencies and national certification bodies such as the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC, 1993) and the National Academy of Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselors (NACCMHC, 1993) identified assessment procedures to verify counselors' ability to implement these skills. These same sources, however, provide little regulation or assessment of the professional and interpersonal roles and skills of counselor educators who are the primary instructors and models for students. Compared to general higher education, counseling is a relatively new profession. It may be a function of our profession's relative youth and its increasing popularity that we have focused our attention on the skills and knowledge base of the service providers rather than those who do the training. But our profession is now both established and searching for more mature stages. It is time we increase the attention paid to those who train counselors and how they relate to students during that training.

Research in other areas of higher education has paid much attention to the relationships between student satisfaction, academic success, personal growth, and student-faculty relationships. Similar research would seem to be of value for counselor education though some disagreement on this issue is hinted at in the literature. Some contend that the training elements that produce effective counselors are not sought persistently enough through counselor education research (Roffers, Cooper, & Sultanoff, 1988). Others hold that the critical training elements are already identified and that the real need is for them to be more systematically implemented (Hackney et al., 1991). Anderson (1989) went further, urging us to more "systematically incorporate didactic, modeling, and experiential sources of learning" (p. 284) in training and to emphasize the functioning of the counselor educator over experience.

A case for increased research and theory development in the area of counselor educator and student interactions is based on the lack of information in the counselor education literature and the fact that other areas of higher education have found useful related findings. A similar examination of formal and informal relationships of faculty to students could begin with the study of styles, techniques, situations, and time spent with students both inside and outside of class. This information might help fill an information gap that could lead to a first textbook for students studying to become counselor educators. The proposed research could also be tied to curriculum planning for counselor educators in their doctoral training programs. Such research would also lend itself to developing future accreditation standards that could speak from a research base on what counselor educators should do as instructors, advisors, models, and mentors. Such research-based standards might even become part of university evaluation systems that often give teaching, advising, and relationships to students considerably less emphasis in promotion and salary decisions than publication record.

Students and programs would also be well served by this research in more direct ways. The very action of doing and reporting the research would demonstrate to students and faculty the importance that the profession places on student opinions, their maturity, and their abilities as emerging professionals. Student inclusion in these discussions and research would increase their involvement in the planning of their own professional development.

Our success in training competent professionals is apparent in the increasing respect
counselors are receiving. We must now challenge ourselves to go beyond this satisfaction to even greater professional competency. This growth and its benefits would likely be spurred by paying more attention to what we do, how we act, and how we relate to our students.

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Source: Counselor Education & Supervision, Dec93, Vol. 33 Issue 2, p80, 9p.

Item Number: 9409260088