TRANSFORMING THE STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE THROUGH ON-LINE COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Lorrie Blair, professor
Juan Carlos Castro, professor
David Pariser, professor
Concordia University

The research project described in this paper is a first step in transforming our approach to supervising student teachers in their practicum settings. Like many North American universities, Concordia University's supervision model involves a triad consisting of a university supervisor, cooperating teacher, and student teacher. This model can be traced to the mid-1800s, when teachers were first trained in "normal schools" (Cuenca, Schmeichel, Butler, Dinkelman, and Nichols, 2011; Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbons, Glassman, and Stevens, 2009.) Despite its persistent and widespread use in North America, there are a number of problems with this model for Art Education.

Research shows that university practicum supervisors are key players in teacher education and have considerable power over assessing student teaching (Ibrahim, 2013). However, during a four-year program, supervisors observe only a small percentage of what occurs in field placement settings. In our department, two practicum courses are deemed as observation only and have no direct university supervision. In others, supervisors make limited visits, during the semester practicum due to a high number of placements across several sites. These limited observations do not allow supervisors to cultivate relationships with the student teachers they supervise, nor to develop an understanding of how to help them within their own situated experience. Often, student teachers do not receive on-going support when they need it most. Moreover, the feedback they receive from university supervisors is highly dependent on teaching that occurs during the midterm and final observations, which and may or may not be indicative of their overall skills and abilities.

Like many other universities, our department has relied on graduate students to serve as supervisors (Cuenca *et al.*, 2011; Nguyen, 2009). We offer little or no training for graduate students who are assigned these supervisory

duties, yet we give them considerable responsibility to assess student teachers.

Given that universities are able to observe only a fraction of the internship, it is important to consider the role of the other member of the triad, the cooperating teacher. The criteria for serving as a cooperating teacher are years of service and a willingness to serve as a mentor, not demonstrated competencies, skills, knowledge, and dispositions of highly accomplished practitioners. For their first two internships, art student teachers are paired with generalist teachers because there are few elementary art teachers in the Montreal area. Although these cooperating teachers may be effective generalists, their lack of art skills and knowledge make them ineffective mentors for student art teachers. It is the authors' experience that many hold views of art as therapy, recreation, or time out from serious subjects, thus undermining the goals of our program. We have effectively outsourced the responsibility for student teacher supervision to cooperating teachers, who receive little or no pay for their work and who have no stake in our program.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that our students often must negotiate conflicting notions of the goals and outcomes of art lessons at the elementary level. They struggle to cope with inconsistencies between their cooperating teacher, university instructors, and university supervisor. Although it has not been the experience in our department, much has been written about potential conflicts between the cooperating teacher and university supervisor (Veal and Rikard, 1998; Valencia, Martin, Place, and Grossman, 2009; Slick, 1998; Bullough and Draper, 2004). The hierarchical nature is rife with power struggles.

Research indicates that some student teachers begin to develop and experience symptoms of burnout during their practicum (Fives, Hamman, and Olivarez, 2007). Student teachers who have experienced academic success are distressed when this does not translate into success as a teacher. The situation is acerbated by not having access to immediate and on-going support from their supervisor and a peer group of other art education students. This can leave student teachers emotionally exhausted and with reduced notions of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy relates to beliefs teachers hold about their perceived abilities to handle tasks such as student motivation and classroom management

and it is essential for producing effective, student centered, and enthusiastic teachers (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Introducing the Pilot Project Research

A number of education programs in North America have explored the potentials of using video analysis of student teaching. For example, New York's Hunter College of Education field-tested the use video analysis of student teaching (N=18). However, they did not use software that allow for asynchronous discussion between the supervisor and student teacher. Additionally, they did not allow peers to provide feedback. Students were required to use specially configured cameras borrowed from the School of Education, which they used for a week before returning (http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/school-of-education/technology/vat/overview). Hamel (2012), a professor in education at Laval University, developed a program involving video conferencing to allow for supervision of internships in remote Quebec locations. This allowed student teachers to complete internships in their region of origin. She used a protected site, which allowed access to triad members.

We propose an online video forum in which student teachers can post videos of themselves teaching in their practicum sites, receive and contribute feedback to their peer's posted videos, and receive feedback from their seminar instructors and a teaching assistant. Specifically, we will research, develop, deploy, and evaluate an online peer-networked video forum for Art Education students in ARTE 423: Practicum in the Secondary School I (3 credits) and ARTE 425: Practicum in the Secondary School II (9 credits). Currently, students enrolled in ARTE 423 (Fall Term) receive no university, nor peer, evaluation and feedback on their teaching practice for a 140-hour practicum. In ARTE 425 (Winter Term), these same students receive two visits from a university supervisor for a 350-hour practicum.

In the summer of 2014, Castro identified a suitable technological platform and curricular approach for using video for teaching practica. He also drew from his past and ongoing research into using social media and peer networked

learning to design an appropriate curriculum that harmonizes with current curricular practice. The technological platform and curriculum is in place this fall. It should also be noted that the research team completed a number of university ethical protocols and received approval for the project. Throughout ARTE 423, a course in which Pariser serves as the instructor, pre-service teachers are asked to upload short videos documenting specific aspects of their teaching practice. For example, students will post short videos of themselves introducing lessons, orchestrating clean up, checking for understanding, sharing technical know-how, and so on.

Students have been assigned a small number of peers in their class to whom they will give feedback to their posted videos. The teaching assistant and Pariser will also participate in offering feedback to all students. Castro will teach and supervise student teachers during the winter term. Student teachers will be asked to identify aspects of their teaching that are proving to be challenging, confusing, or frustrating. This will not only provide an avenue of support for student teachers, but this support will be provided in a timely manner. In the past, the university supervisor was unable to accommodate impromptu site visits. Furthermore, students will be developing a practice of reflective teaching as they are asked to identify areas of their teaching that can be improved. Our ultimate goal is to provide a robust system of feedback and support for students in their practicum placements. With few occasions for full-time faculty to view, evaluate, and support student teachers in the field, course content of this new peer-networked online video forum will provide an opportunity for faculty to better link course content and classroom practice.

One of the key strategies used in this project to address the problem is the "leveling" effect of having a student teacher, his or her peers and the university supervisor work collaboratively to offer critique and feedback. Thus, we anticipate that a non-hierarchical relationship will develop between instructor and students. Under these circumstances, the student will be as much of an "expert" as the teacher. Moreover, student teachers will be encouraged to show perceived failures, which can be a great source for learning. Another key stratagem leveraged is the peer network of support that through the anytime

and anywhere qualities of mobile media offers asynchronous and rapid feedback. Furthermore, students will be able to learn from their peers' videos and feedback received even if they have not yet encountered the particulars of their peers' context. It will provide a searchable resource throughout the year that can be referenced by all students in ARTE 423 and 425.

Our primary source of data collection will be of semi-structured interviews of instructors and focus group interviews with Art Education students. At the end of the semester, Blair and graduate research assistants will conduct exit focus group interviews to determine the student teachers' perceptions of the project. We elect to conduct focus group interviews because this method allows participants to express ideas and feelings about certain issues and relies on the synergy of the group's interaction (Vaughan, Schumm, and Sinagub 1996). The focus group interviews in particular will provide us with valuable data concerning the beliefs, preconceptions, expectations and experiences that art education students have of the project.

Transforming student teaching supervision:

The establishment of an online video forum would move the practica component of our program to a hybrid online/offline model. By equipping student teachers with the means to document their teaching for feedback and support, they will feel less isolated and more effective. It would establish a collective knowledge system that could both teach students and learn from the students' asynchronous content (videos and written) on the online video forum. Not only will students learn from the feedback and support from their own teaching practice, but they will also have an opportunity to see and engage with their peers' teaching and classrooms. This decentralized knowledge network will provide specific and appropriate pedagogical support in a "just in time" and "on demand" learning environment.

Concordia University, like many universities is facing increased demands and decreased funding for teacher training. Student teaching supervision is an expensive and time-consuming process. In North America, a number of universities are creating on-line MA programs that offer supervision at a

distance. There is a great demand for research aimed to improve the effectiveness of assessment of student teachers and the need to study new models of student teaching supervision.

References

Bullough, R. & Draper, R. (2004). Making sense of a failed triad: Mentors, university supervisors, and positioning theory. *Journal of Teacher Education, 55* (5), 407-420.

Cuenca, A., Schmeichel, M., Butler, B., Dinkelman, T., & Nichols, J. (2011). Creating a "third space" in student teaching: Implications for the university supervisor's status as outsider. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*, 1068-1077.

Fives, H., Hamman, D., & Olivarez, A. (2007). Does burnout begin with student teaching? Analyzing efficacy, burnout, and support during the student teaching semester. *Teaching and Teacher Education* ,23, 916-934.

Goodnough, K., Osmond, P., Dibbon, D., Glassman, M., & Stevens, K. (2009). Exploring a triad model of student teaching: Pre-service teacher and cooperating teacher perceptions. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*, 285-296.

Hamel, C. (2012). Supervision of pre-service teacher: Using internet collaborative tools to support their return to their region of origin. *Canadian Journal of Education, 35* (2), 141-154.

Ibrahim, A. (2013). Approaches to supervision of student teachers in one UAE teacher education program. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 34*, 38-45.

Nguyen, H. (2009). An inquiry-based practicum model: What knowledge, practices, and relationships typify empowering teaching and learning experiences for student teachers, cooperating teachers and college supervisors? *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*, 655-662.

Slick, N. (1998). A university supervisor negotiates territory and status. *Journal of Teacher Education, 4* (4), *306-315.*

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 17* (7), 783-805.

Valencia, S., Martin, S., Place, N., & Grossman, P. (2009). Complex interactions in student teaching: Lost opportunities for learning. *Journal of Teacher Education, 60* (3), 304-322.

Vaughan, S., Schumm, J.S., & Sinagub, J. (1996). *Focus group interviews in education and psychology.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Veal, M.L. & Rikard, L. (1998). Cooperating teachers' perspectives on the student teaching triad. *Journal of Teacher Education, 49* (2), 108-119.