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A Supervisory Issue When Utilizing the ASCA National Model Framework in School Counseling

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According to the American School Counselor Association, the field of school counseling began as vocational guidance in the early 1900's (ASCA, 2012). However, within twenty years, the core of school counseling gradually changed due to mental hygiene, psychometric and child study movements (ASCA, 2012). As a result, school counseling shifted from economic and vocational issues to psychological issues with an emphasis on counseling and personal adjustment (ASCA, 2012). According to ASCA (2012) another area of debate was school counselor roles, focus, and program goals. For example, some researchers asserted school counselors should focus on academics and careers, while others urged the importance of addressing mental health issues (ASCA, 2012). Consequently, the American School Counselor Association adopted a holistic approach and implemented the *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* (ASCA, 2012). In fact, in 2003, the ASCA National Model, which emphasized academic, career, and personal social (mental health) domains, was adopted by states and school districts across the country (ASCA, 2012).

Abstract

The authors discuss a supervisory issue, in that; the ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs does not emphasize on-going supervision where ethical expectations of supervisors and supervisees in a school setting are clearly defined. Subsequently, the authors highlight supervisor expectations stated with the ASCA National Model as well as highlight further specific suggestions for clinical supervision for school counselors.

Keywords: clinical supervision, school counselors, ASCA National Model

It is evident from the history that clinical mental health practices influenced certain aspects of the ASCA National Model. Interestingly enough, there is one important characteristic of clinical mental health that the ASCA National Model did not widely adopt, and that practice is supervision. Researchers Bernard and Goodyear (2014) postulated supervision provides ongoing opportunities for feedback and reflection that support the growth and development of all mental health professionals while simultaneously protecting the welfare of their clients. Despite the existing literature, clinical supervision appears to lack support from the ASCA National Model (Swank & Tyson, 2012). As a result, this presents one major supervisory issue; the *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* (2012) does not emphasize on-going supervision where expectations of supervisors and supervisees in school settings are clearly defined.

Ethical Considerations for Supervision in School Counseling

Presently, school counselors routinely deal with complicated situations including: cases of severe depression, suicidal ideation, pregnancy, substance abuse, school violence, and child abuse (Herlihy, Gray, & McCollum, 2002). Moreover, in order to efficiently respond to these needs, school counselors must obtain strong clinical skills and an acute awareness of legal and ethical ramifications of all actions they take or fail to take (Herlihy et al., 2002). Thus, supervision can be an effective way of assisting school counselors in maintaining and enhancing their competence (Herlihy et al., 2002). However, a major supervisory issue within the school counseling arena remains; there is the need for on-going supervision where ethical expectations of the supervisor and supervisee in a school setting are clearly defined.

Consequently, it is critical to examine ethical issues experienced by supervisors. Wheeler and Bertram (2012) identified transference, dependency and competency as ethical concerns within the supervisor/supervisee relationship. For example, when considering the supervision process in the school setting, the aforementioned ethical issues are frequently experienced. More specifically,



transference, countertransference, power, and dependency are some of the major ethical issues that supervisors and supervisees experience during the supervision process (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009).

As an illustration, a supervisor attempting to develop and maintain an appropriate and ethical relationship with a supervisee may come to recognize that the relationship has deviated from the expected norm (Williams, 2008). To further explore this example using transference and countertransference, imagine the same supervisor working within a school setting has experienced a horrific childhood as a result of physically abusive parents. Now, imagine the supervisee presents a tape of a student experiencing a similar problem. In turn, the supervisor may allow repressed feelings of resentment towards his/her family to negatively impact the supervisory relationship. Accordingly, this would be an example of how the supervisor's personal experiences are creating negative transference and countertransference on the supervisory relationship.

Overall, it is essential to continually evaluate how transference, countertransference, power, and dependency are impacting the supervision process. This could be accomplished through continual reflection and evaluation of the supervision process. In addition, supervisors could utilize continual collaboration with other helping professionals for consultation purposes in order to evaluate those constructs of transference, countertransference, power, and dependency.

A subsequent ethical dilemma that may negatively impact the supervision experience is dual relationships (Williams, 2008). More specifically, dual relationships can also negatively influence the supervisory relationship in a school setting. For example, imagine the school counseling supervisor has been providing ongoing counseling for a supervisee who is struggling with severe depression. Over time, the supervisor begins to notice that the supervisee has become less concerned with completing daily tasks such as guidance lessons, career counseling, group counseling, etc.

Insufficient supervisory support increases stress, negative feelings, and contributes to counselor ineffectiveness, burn out, and role dissatisfaction.

and has started to become more concerned with the therapy being provided by his/her counselor/supervisor. Although personal issues of the supervisee that might have a negative impact on supervisor/supervisee relationship should be identified, these issues should be more fully explored with another counseling professional (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Overall, it is imperative that supervisors continually evaluate how dual relationships impact the supervision process.

Clinical Supervision for School Counselors

Researchers Luke and Bernard (2006) stated clinical supervision is a viable part of school counselor training and is recognized as a necessary component by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). However, its presence in school counseling contexts is minimal (Luke & Bernard, 2006). Although clinical supervision is generally discussed in the literature, it is least likely to be received by school counselors (Remley and Herlihy, 2001). Additionally, school counselors are not mandated to participate in supervision after obtaining employment like other mental health counselors who are obligated to attain supervision for licensure requirements (Swank & Tyson, 2012). In fact, Somody, Henderson, Cook, and Zambrano (2008) found that over seventy-five percent of school counselors did not receive clinical supervision despite indicating a desire for it.

Given the fact that many school counselors do not receive supervision, and that the ASCA National Model does not widely address the topic, school counselors are often unprepared to offer clinical supervision to practicum and intern students (Swank & Tyson, 2012). For example, DeKruyf and Pehrsson (2011) presented that the shortage of trained school

counselor supervisors is a concern. In the same vein, these researchers reported site supervisors help shape intern professional identity and suggest training needs should focus on counselor development, supervision techniques, supervisory relationships, and models of supervision (DeKruyf & Pehrsson, 2011). Furthermore, Somody et al. (2008) conveyed insufficient supervisory support increases stress, negative feelings, and contributes to counselor ineffectiveness, burn out, and role dissatisfaction.

Another possible explanation for untrained supervisors is that the ASCA National Model suggests school counselors receive supervision from school administrators rather than senior counselors in the field (ASCA, 2012). An illustration of this can be seen in the ASCA National Model's principal/counselor management agreement (ASCA, 2012). Much like the supervision agreement between the supervisor and supervisee, the ASCA management agreement safeguards a formal discussion between the school counselor and the principal as it relates to program goals (ASCA, 2012). Alarming, in a recent study Swank and Tyson (2012) affirmed sixty-three percent of school counselor participants receive administrative supervision from principals that focus on administrative tasks rather than supervision that focused on competence and counseling.

Supervisor Expectations within the ASCA National Model

Despite its importance in counselor development, Swank and Tyson (2012) reported supervision is scarcely mentioned in the ASCA National Model. Ironically, the 2008 ASCA *Counseling Competencies* references supervising students and participating in supervision throughout a counselor's career (Swank & Tyson, 2010), whereas, the 2012 ASCA *Counseling Competencies* does not reference supervision. The deletion of supervision from the ASCA counseling competencies is critical, in that, it removed systematic opportunities for professional assessment and responsive feedback. Furthermore,



Somody, Henderson, and Cook (2008) stated clinical supervision for school counselors is vital because it provides monitoring and feedback concerning the school counselors' micro performance in time-defined and specific counseling activities.

Interestingly enough, ASCA did not remove the reference of supervision from its ethical standards. In fact, supervision is referenced within two sections of the ASCA (2010) *Ethical Standards for School Counselors*. The first reference of supervision states school counselors have a responsibility to self to seek supervision if the need arises (Standard E.1.f). This standard confirms the premise that ASCA does not require, but merely suggest, ongoing supervision as practice for school counselors.

The subsequent reference, Standard F.3, discusses supervision of practicum and internship school counseling candidates. More specifically, the standard states school counselor supervisors should support interns in providing personal/social, academic, and career (college planning) counseling experiences to interns (Standard F.3.a). The ASCA (2010) *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* go on to state that supervisors should ensure school counseling candidates gain experience in the development, implementation, and evaluating of data-driven, comprehensive school counseling models (Standard F.3.b). In addition, the standard acknowledges the importance of counseling candidates gaining experience in the four quadrant systems (Foundation, Delivery, Management, and Accountability) (Standard F.3.c). Subsequently, Standard F.3 addresses obtaining liability insurance during the internship experiences and ensuring site visits are scheduled for school counselor candidates.

An equally important point that is presented after reviewing the ASCA (2010) Ethical Standards for School Counselors is that supervisors are not mentioned within the standard (Swank & Tyson, 2012). Although the ASCA National Model minimally mentions supervision there is a critical need for supervisors to receive supervision training and practicing counselors to receive on going supervision. In turn, site supervisors will be able to assist interns and practicum students in developing their counseling skills, improving their diagnosis skills, and addresses their client's concerns (Swank & Tyson, 2012).

Suggestions for Clinical Supervision for School Counselors

The authors feel that it is very clear that there is a need for the efficacy of clinical supervision for school counselors because of ethical issues that may arise in a school setting and the remaining ambiguity of the supervisor and counselor-in-training roles presented in the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) book entitled, *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* (2012). Moreover, the authors found that ASCA's National Model has little to no specific clarifications of the role and expectations of supervisors, the role and expectations of supervisees, and how to specifically address the various ethical dilemmas and supervisory issues that may be experienced in a school setting.

Again, although the ASCA National Model minimally mentions supervision, the authors feel that there is a critical need for supervisors to receive clear-cut supervision training and practicing counselors to receive on-going supervision with clearly defined expectations of both parties. In turn, site supervisors will be able to assist interns and practicum students in developing their counseling skills, improving their diagnosis skills, and addresses their client's concerns (Swank & Tyson, 2012). Consequently, the authors suggest the following amendments be added to the ASCA National Model to address the recognized need for on-going supervision for school counselors. As recognized in the ASCA National Model, school counselors should work with school administrators to create an annual agreement to ensure that the goals of the school counseling program effectively

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Two very effective methods of providing supervision training were noted during our research: Solution-Focused Supervision incorporated with Web-Based Supervision

align with the goals and mission of the school. Within this agreement, school counselors must identify areas for professional development and collaboration (ASCA, 2012). Moreover, the authors suggest adding a section within this agreement where supervision is identified as a professional development opportunity.

Furthermore, the model also provides competencies for school counselors to acknowledge and evaluate themselves as it pertains to possessing the necessary knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes to effectively plan and implement a school counseling program aligned with the ASCA National Model. Competency III-B-1g suggests that school counselors develop a yearly professional development plan demonstrating how the school counselor advances relevant knowledge, skills, and dispositions (ASCA, 2012). Again, the authors feel that adding supervision would effectively aid in allowing the counselor to demonstrate a means of advancing school counselor competencies.

Bernard and Goodyear (2009) suggested that school counseling supervision should focus on five main areas: educating the counselor; helping with skill development; increasing abilities to conceptualize clients; supporting the development of professional behaviors and attitudes; and increasing self-awareness. These areas become increasingly significant when considering the ambiguity of school counselor's roles and responsibilities and the lack of supervision training provided to these same counselors both have a major influence on the experience of the intern/supervisee. Moreover, several studies have been conducted to explore school counseling intern roles

and responsibilities in comparison to the recommendations set forth by the ASCA National Model. For instance, in a study conducted by Leuwerke, Bruinkool, and Lane (2008) data revealed that a significant amount of the school counseling interns' time was devoted to inappropriate tasks and activities. The discrepancies between counseling interns' time and ASCA recommendations were simply startling.

Although school counselors are not mandated to receive neither clinical supervision nor training in how to provide said supervision after receiving their master's degree, they are expected to respond to the social/emotional needs of the students whom they serve and occasionally provide supervision to interns and practicum students (Swank, 2012). According to Magnuson, Black, and Norem (2004), supervision is an essential component within quality clinical experiences for school counseling practicum and internship students; therefore selecting school counseling site supervisors who are trained in clinical supervision is crucial.

Two very effective methods of providing supervision training were noted during our research. These methods provide possible solutions to addressing the recognized need for continued supervision for school counselors and effective training for site supervisors in providing said training (Cigrand & Wood, 2010, Swank, J. 2012). School counselors-in-training often must find a balance between the multiple and sometimes conflicting expectations of the university training program's supervisors and site supervisors in cooperating schools (Askos & Scarborough, 2004). Incorporating at least one of the suggested methods may also reduce the conflict which can exist between meeting the requirements of university and site for interns and practicum students (Leuwerk, R., Bruinekool M., & Lane, A. 2008).

Solution-Focused Supervision is the first method the authors suggest when offering training for site supervisors. The specific techniques of the solution-focused paradigm may lend themselves to interns' increased performance in and knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of professional school counselors as prescribed by the ASCA National Model (Cigrand & Wood, 2010). The goal of Solution-Focused Supervision (SFS), is to recognize and build upon the strengths of the supervisee (Cigrand & Wood, 2010). It is understood that the supervisee has the tools and skills necessary to solve their own issues in dealing with their clients and it is merely the role of the supervisor to facilitate self-discovery (Cigrand & Wood, 2010). The process of Solution-Focused Supervision includes: eliciting the interns' beliefs and ideas; exploring prior attempts at solutions; identifying differences between the past and current intern performance; adjusting for the intern's pace of development,

strengths and limitations; and assuming change will occur while empowering the intern to make the change (Cigrand & Wood 2010).

As cited in Cigrand and Wood (2010), Wood and Rayle (2006) suggest that a supervision approach needs to be clear, concise, and practical. Such is the case in regards to Solution-Focused Supervision. Applying this approach in supervision calls for the SFS supervisor to acknowledge and explore a supervisory power differential (Cigrand & Wood, 2010). This shift in power allows room for the development of a safe relationship in which the supervisee's are seen more as the experts in this journey of self-reflection and self-discovery. The site supervisor's primary area of expertise is the process of solution-focused supervision, itself, which includes eliciting the supervisees' beliefs and ideas; exploring prior attempts at solutions; identifying differences between past and current supervisee performance; adjusting for the intern's pace of development, strengths, and limitations; and assuming change will occur while empowering the supervisee to make that change (Cigrand & Wood, 2010).

In essence, Solution-Focused Supervision offers an array of benefits for all parties involved. This research-based counseling paradigm provides current and potential site supervisors an easy-to-follow process and method, which matches supervisor skill to supervisee need. It uses the implementation of the ASCA National Model as a guide for supervisee development; allows university supervisors to receive detailed goals and concrete ways of measuring those goals from the supervisee; and it also enhances the relationship between the university supervisor and site supervisor by suggesting the use of common language thereby decreasing the complexities of coordination and lessening differing expectations (Cigrand & Wood, 2012).

Furthermore, incorporating a web-based approach for supervisor training is suggested. This web-based supervision training program supports collaborations between counselor education programs and local school systems (Swank, 2012). This method addresses the prominent claim that little importance is placed on school counseling supervision postmasters' degree. Web-based supervision is deemed advantageous in that it provides a basic level of supervision knowledge for site supervisors through the completion of virtual modules, which also promote consistency among all site supervisors (Swank, 2012). The training modules include: an introduction, (allows participants to become comfortable in using the programming software); an outline of the requirements and expectations for the practicum and intern students; a breakdown of the perceived general characteristics

of practicum and internship level supervisee; a brief overview of three broad categories of supervision models; an exploration of supervision methods and techniques; and lastly, a look at the possible ethical and legal issues related to supervision. The modules are completed at the pace of the site supervisor (Swank, 2012). While accessibility and flexibility are key components of this method, site supervisors are not deemed qualified to provide supervision until such time as all six modules are concluded (Swank, 2012).

In closing, it is vitally important for supervisors in the counseling field and other helping professions to remain vigilant in following appropriate ethical obligations sanctioned by the individuals' profession. Although ethical and legal statutes are vaguely touched upon by the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) book entitled, *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*, it is critical that a stronger emphasis be placed on continual supervision in a school setting where the expectations of supervisors and supervisees in school settings are clearly defined. In the future, school counselors should incessantly advocate for a strengthened emphasis on clear, concise clinical supervision in a school setting in order to adequately prepare counselors and counselor's-in-training alike.

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