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Aligning Mentorship Style With Beginning Teachers' Development: Contextual Supervision

Contextual Supervision (CS), a developmental mentoring model recently designed, applied, and refined in a teaching internship setting in Western Canada, has been shown to be useful in providing guidance to the supervision of teacher-interns during their extended practicum. The present study (in which the author was a participant-observer) provides further qualitative and quantitative evidence that illustrates the effectiveness of CS in guiding practicum supervisors in the task of helping beginning teachers to develop their instructional skills. It also suggests that the CS model can prove useful in supervisory practice with developing practitioners in a variety of instructional settings.

La supervision contextuelle (Contextual Supervision - CS, en anglais), un modèle de mentorat expérimental que l'on vient de concevoir, appliquer et raffiner pendant un stage pédagogique dans l'Ouest du Canada, s'est avérée utile pour guider la supervision de stagiaires pendant leur stage prolongé. Cette étude (lors de laquelle l'auteur a agit tant comme participant que comme observateur) ajoute aux preuves qualitatives et quantitatives qui démontrent l'efficacité de la supervision contextuelle dans l'encadrement des superviseurs de stagiaires pendant qu'ils les aident dans l'acquisition d'habiletés pédagogiques. De plus, les résultats laissent croire que ce modèle pourrait être utile lors de la supervision de stagiaires dans différents milieux d'enseignement.

We had a real personality clash!

My intern was stubborn ... He wouldn't listen even though I told him over and over.

My cooperating teacher was so rigid ... It was simply her way or the highway.

She was just plain scared ... she wouldn't take any risks ... I told her she had "to sink or swim" like we all had to do when we started teaching.

These comments made by teacher-interns or their classroom cooperating teachers (CCTs)—in the context of the 16-week extended practicum offered through the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan—are indicative of a recurring problem that typically arises during the supervisory process. Although these statements were expressed to explain or to rationalize a mentor's or a protégé's actions and/or reactions when interpersonal difficulties arose in the supervisory relationship, these assertions do not represent accurate reasons for the conflict because they do not identify a more serious problem.

Rather, recent educational research has shown that disagreements—especially between a supervisor and a supervisee in the extended practicum program—are often the direct result of the individual in the leadership position

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failing to match appropriately his or her mentorship style with the protégé's unique developmental level to perform a particular instructional skill or task (Ralph, 1993).

One mentorship model, *Contextual Supervision* (CS)¹—which has been developed, applied, and refined during the past several years in the extended practicum² setting—has been found to achieve three aims: (a) to assist supervisory personnel (i.e., both the college supervisors and the classroom cooperating teachers) to identify and to resolve this mismatching problem; and thereby (b) to improve their mentorship effectiveness; and in turn (c) to better coach preservice teachers to develop their professional skills and attributes (Ralph, 1998; Watt, 1998).

The purpose of this article is to present further research evidence that supports the effectiveness of the CS model in meeting these three objectives. Before summarizing the research methodology and findings of this study, I briefly describe CS and its application.

What is Contextual Supervision?

CS is a developmental mentorship model derived from the initial Situational Leadership (SL) approach (Hersey, 1985; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977), in which the *mentor* or *supervisor* (i.e., any professional who by virtue of his or her previous expertise and experience fulfills a supervisory or coaching role, that is, the college supervisor or the CCT) assists a *protégé* or *supervisee* (i.e., any less experienced colleague such as the teacher-intern) to acquire new professional knowledge and skills or to refine existing ones.

The process is *contextual* because the mentoring relationship is affected by a complex web of factors unique to each mentoring setting as illustrated by the outer border of Figure 1 (e.g., psychological, organizational, or cultural influences).

The foundational values on which CS is based are *justice* (i.e., the fair treatment of and the respect for the integrity of individuals) and *beneficence* (i.e., the virtue devoted to the welfare of the protégé, Frankena, 1973; Fullan, 1997; Noddings, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1992).

The three guiding principles linking this philosophical foundation with actual practice of CS are:

1. *Constructivism* (the cognitive-developmental process through which learners actively build personal meaning by connecting new experience with previously acquired knowledge), as espoused by such researchers as Resnick (1987), Steffe and Gale (1995), and Vygotsky (1978);
2. *Collaboration* (the social interaction and cooperation occurring between or among group members as they seek to accomplish common goals), as advocated by such writers as Fullan (1991, 1997); Hargreaves (1997); and Senge (1995); and
3. *Commitment* (participants' dedication to pursue excellence in their respective fields of endeavor); see, for example, Ralph (1993, 1998, 1999); Sergiovanni (1992, 1994).

The heart of the CS model is the *practice* component depicted in the center portion of Figure 1. Here the person in the mentor role adjusts his or her supervisory style to meet the current developmental needs of the protégé in

performing a particular task or skill. Although each supervisory situation will be influenced by a number of contextual elements, the only factor over which the mentor has any direct control is his or her own supervisory response, which for the CS approach is rooted in its philosophy and principles.

The CS model is applied in a skill-specific manner, because a supervisee may be at a different performance level for each instructional skill. This variation necessitates a supervisor's corresponding mentoring style adjustment for each of the protégé's skill levels.

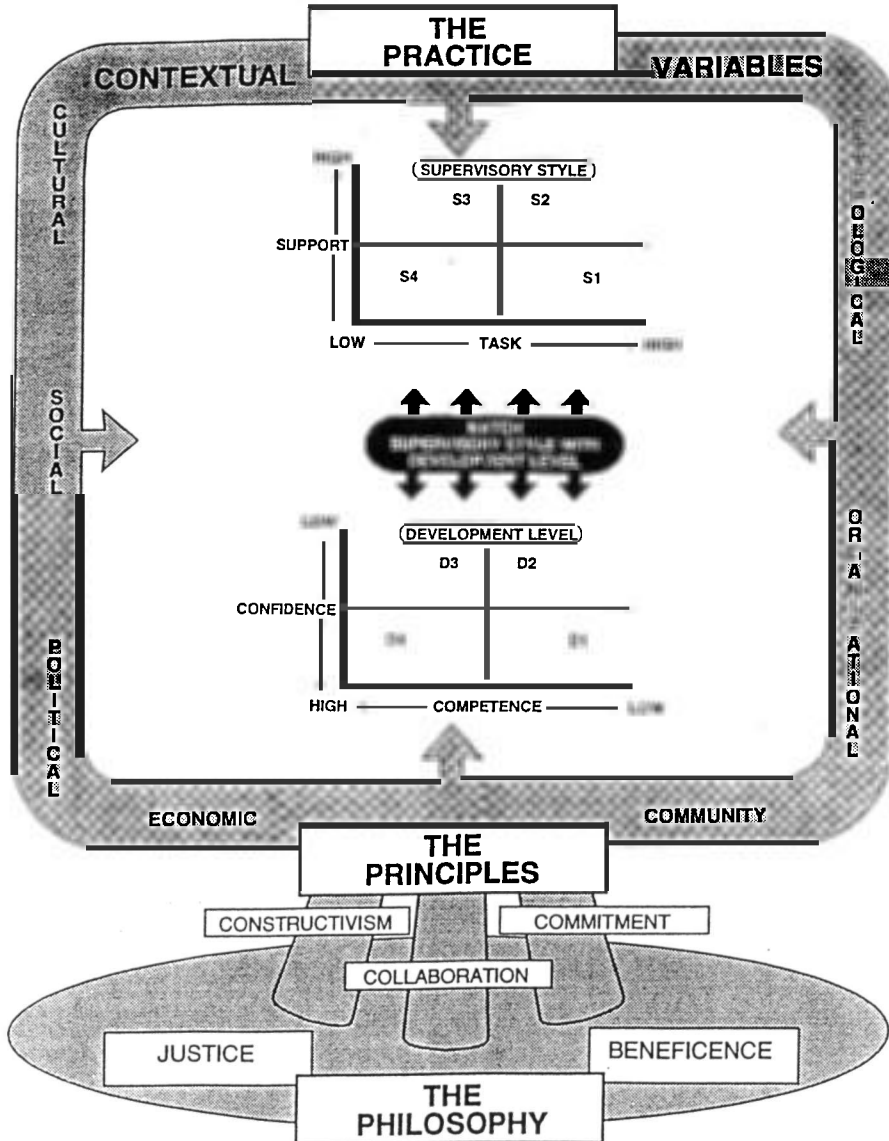


Figure 1. Contextual supervision model. Copyright 1996 by Edwin Ralph and the Canadian Administrator, 35(5), p. 2. Used with permission.

How is CS Applied?

CS has been shown to be a useful mentorship model for supervisors to use in assisting beginning teachers to internalize new or to develop existing instructional skills (Ralph, 1993, 1996). The research on CS to this point has been conducted with preservice teachers and their mentors (i.e., their college-based supervisors and classroom cooperating teachers) during the extended practicum period of their teacher education program (Ralph, 1998; Watt, 1998). Throughout each practicum the college supervisor conducts workshops with a cohort of pairs of teacher-interns and their cooperating teachers, and also coordinates four or more clinical supervision sessions with each pair in their own classroom in order to facilitate the protégé's mastery of a recognized set of essential skills drawn from the body of teaching effectiveness research (University of Saskatchewan, 2000-2001).

This set of professional attributes, knowledge, and skills derived from the extensive body of research literature on teaching effectiveness consists of several broad categories of teaching, each composed of a specific group of several subskills (Anderson & Burns, 1989; Borich, 2000; Wittrock, 1986) such as: (a) personal and professional attributes (e.g., fulfills professional commitments); (b) instructional preparation (e.g., creates short- and long-term teaching plans); (c) presenting (e.g., provides clear directions); (d) classroom management (e.g., handles disruptive student behavior effectively); (e) oral questioning (e.g., poses clear questions); (f) responding (e.g., provides positive reinforcement in an effective manner); (g) evaluating pupils' work (e.g., uses a variety of assessment instruments); and (h) methodologies (e.g., uses a variety of instructional approaches to motivate students' learning).

During the practicum inservices and the triad clinical sessions in which most of the CS research was conducted, as researcher I took the role of a participant-observer. As a college supervisor, I described and demonstrated how CS was to be applied by both the college supervisor and the cooperating teachers in order to assist the teacher-interns to learn (or to improve) their professional skills in their teaching practice. As a researcher, I collected data on how the mentors (including myself) actually applied the CS model during the internship period. (This data collection process is described in the Method section.)

The three steps that are used in applying the CS model are described below.

Determine developmental level. The first phase in applying CS is for the pair (or triad if the college supervisor is present) to determine the existing developmental level of the protégé to perform the specific task or skill being learned.

As indicated in the D grid of Figure 1, an individual's skill-specific level of development consists of varying degrees of both his or her *competence* (i.e., actual skill or ability to perform the particular task) and his or her *confidence* (i.e., feelings of self-assurance, comfort, or security to perform it). The D1 level reflects an individual's level of low competence and high confidence to do the task (i.e., he or she does not know how to execute the skill, but is willing, open, and eager to learn). A person at D2 is low on both dimensions; a learner at D3 shows high competence and low confidence in executing the skill, and one at D4 is high on both elements.

Beginning practitioners have been shown typically to begin at a D1 or D2 level in performing a particular teaching task, and through guided practice and experience they progress eventually to D3 and D4 levels (Ralph, 1996). Thus D1 typifies an *eager novice* or *enthusiastic beginner*, D2 characterizes a *fearful neophyte* or a *disillusioned amateur*; D3 describes a *reluctant contributor* or an *insecure leader*; and D4 exemplifies a *peak performer* or a *calm expert* (Ralph, 1993). It is, therefore, logical to assume that a goal of the supervisory pair is for teacher-interns to achieve a D4 level in each of their teaching abilities, although in theoretical terms one could argue that the competence dimension is more important than the confidence aspect. In practical terms, however, the CS model emphasizes that each dimension is essential, but not sufficient in achieving one's maximum performance in a specific teaching skill.

A supervisee's developmental level may be ascertained in three ways: (a) by his or her answers to direct questions about it from the mentor; (b) from the pair's pre- and postconferences, informal dialogue, and casual conversations about the protégé's specific teaching performance; and (c) from formal and informal observations of the novice's teaching by the cooperating teacher and/or college supervisor.

The earlier CS research has confirmed that the existing levels of a supervisee's development are skill-specific, they are changeable over time, they are often different for different skills, and they are not to be fixed to label or categorize permanently a protégé's overall teaching performance (Ralph, 1994a, 1994b, 1996). Furthermore, the four D quadrants represent typical positions along a continuum of varied combinations of the protégé's confidence and competence to do the task (Ralph, 1993, 1998).

Synchronize supervisory style. After determining the protégé's task-specific level of performance, the mentor must appropriately match his or her supervisory response to meet the existing developmental needs of the supervisee for the skill in question. This matching process represents the heart of the CS model.

As depicted in Figure 1, the mentorship or supervisory style consists of two leadership dimensions, shown on the two axes of the S grid. One element is the *support* element (the human relationship aspect in which the mentor's response may vary along a range from a greater to lesser degree of encouragement, positive reinforcement, and psychological or emotional support for the teacher-intern). The other aspect is the *task* dimension (the technical or mechanical component of mastering a skill or competence being practiced) in which the mentor's response may vary along a continuum from greater to lesser *telling* or directedness. This task-dimension involves the mentor varying the amount of direct specifying, showing, guiding, and providing of advice or procedural strategies regarding the protégé's technique in mastering the particular skill.

As illustrated by the darkened multiple arrow portion of Figure 1, the mentor executes this matching process by synchronizing an S1 style with the protégé's D1 level, an S2 style with a D2 level, and so on. The key approach here is that the degree of the mentor's task response is reciprocal to the extent of the protégé's competence level; and simultaneously, the extent of his or her supportive behavior is similarly inversely proportional to the novice's existing level of confidence in performing the particular skill.

For example, a learner's low level of competence in a skill calls for the mentor's high degree of task orientation (i.e., the supervisee does not know what to do or how to do it and therefore needs the mentor to specify these elements). Further, the protégé's high level of confidence requires a low supportive response from the supervisor (i.e., the learner already has adequate self-assurance and does not require a great amount of mentor encouragement and praise to bolster his or her confidence because it is already high).

Continually monitor and adjust style. The mentorship pair (or triad) would continue to monitor the supervisee's particular skill development, and the mentor would subsequently adjust his or her supervisory style accordingly. Thus as a protégé advances from D1 to D2 to D3 to D4, the mentor would reciprocate by responding correspondingly with an S1, S2, S3, and S4 style.

Method

In this report I summarize research conducted with six cohorts of classroom cooperating teachers and their interns that examined these teachers' application of the CS model in the mentorship of their supervisees' oral questioning skills. Questioning skills were selected as the focus of the study of the supervision process because of the importance of oral questioning in: (a) promoting students' critical and creative thinking, (b) motivating and stimulating learners' attention, and (c) enhancing teachers' presenting and classroom management skills (Anderson & Burns, 1989; Borich, 2000; Good & Brophy, 2000; University of Saskatchewan, 2000-2001). The subskills in oral questioning that the teacher-interns sought to master were:

1. To ask clear, concise questions (avoids six patterns of questioning errors: cue questions, fragmented, multiple, yes/no, rhetorical, and run-on);
2. To monitor student understanding;
3. To use directed questions equitably among students;
5. To pose a variety of levels of questions (related to Bloom's Taxonomy); and
6. To encourage learners themselves to formulate and to ask questions.

The teacher-interns were to practice these subskills in their teaching throughout the practicum, and they received supervisory feedback (during clinical supervision sessions) about their performance of these skills.

Participants

Six cohorts of supervisory pairs ($n=70$ pairs) with whom I worked as the college supervisor were representative of the total populations both of the graduating teachers from the College of Education from 1995 to 1998 and of the classroom cooperating teachers with whom they were paired for the internship experiences in schools throughout the province. The six cohorts, which ranged in size from 6 to 16 pairs, exhibited the following representative characteristics: both sexes, a range of age levels, a variety of assigned grades and subjects taught; a range of types and locations of schools (rural and urban, and public and separate); and a variety of prior educational backgrounds, experiences, and ability levels.

Procedure

I adopted action research, an approach in the qualitative paradigm, in which I as researcher was in the field of study (Furlong & Maynard, 1995; Mertens, 1998). I applied CS myself in my own mentoring of the CCTs and interns; and

I taught, intervened, and elaborated on the pairs' use of the model in their supervisory relationships. Thus as a participant-observer in these studies, I not only applied the model, but coached others in its use while simultaneously studying and analyzing all these processes through my reflection-on- and reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983, 1987). Replicating the methodology followed in the earlier CS studies on the supervision of teacher-interns in classroom management skills (Ralph, 1996, 1998), I sought to determine the effectiveness of the CS approach employed in helping the interns to develop their instructional skills. The key assumption undergirding this action was that when a supervisor correctly synchronizes his or her mentorship style with the protégé's developmental level, the latter will receive the optimum degrees of support and direction to enhance their respective growth in confidence and competence to master the skill being practiced.

I determined this degree of matching by having each of the 140 participants complete two survey charts—a pre- and a postpractice survey—administered to each cohort five to six weeks apart during the extended practicum program.

At the second of the three regular monthly internship workshops that I conducted with all the CCTs and their teacher-interns in each of the cohorts (during the sixth week of the practicum), I first described, explained, or demonstrated the CS model as the framework that was to be used as the supervisory approach during the internship term. Then, at the end of this session, I asked each member of the pairs to rate themselves according to their respective locations on the two CS grids.

The instructional skill that was to be rated was restricted to oral questioning. Each participant was asked to mark two positions, one on each of two quadrant charts similar to those shown in Figure 1. One of these marked points was to be plotted on the D grid for each partner's view on the intern's then-current developmental level in oral questioning. The second point was to indicate each partner's view on the supervisor's leadership style on one of the four S quadrants with respect to helping the intern in practicing and learning the questioning skills at that time. Each partner was thus given an S grid and a D grid chart so that they could consider all dimension combinations carefully before placing their two Xs on the respective grids: one for the intern on a D quadrant, and one for the CCT on an S quadrant.

These two plottings were to represent where each CCT and each intern would position himself or herself and his or her partner in terms of the supervision of interns' oral questioning skills at that precise juncture of the internship. The CCTs and the interns were asked first to plot their own and their partners' respective locations on the D and S grids and then were asked to discuss their decisions. Space on the surveys was also provided for respondents to write any additional comments about their selections.

As had been done in the earlier studies, I analyzed each pair's four marked grid sheets—each member of the pair having marked a position where (a) they saw themselves in their respective S or D grid, and (b) where they believed their partner to be on the corresponding D or S quadrant sheet.

For each pair in the cohort, I recorded on a master sheet the four marked quadrants: (a) where the classroom cooperative teacher (CCT) placed himself or herself in one of the quadrants on the supervisory grid (i.e., S1, S2, S3, or S4);

(b) where the intern placed the CCT on this supervisory grid; (c) where the intern positioned himself or herself in one of the quadrants on the developmental-level grid (i.e., D1, D2, D3, or D4); and (d) where the CCT positioned her or his intern on this developmental-level grid. Then for each pair, I compared both the CCT's self- and his or her partner's ratings with respect to the CCT's supervisory-style quadrant. That is, where on the S grid did the CCT place himself or herself, and where did the intern place the CCT on the S grid?

Similarly, I compared both the intern's self- and partner's plottings for the intern's developmental-level quadrants. That is, where on the D grid did the intern place himself or herself, and where did the CCT place the intern on the D grid? By means of these comparisons I was able to determine: (a) where both participants placed themselves in the supervisory relationship; (b) where they placed their partners; and (c) the degree of match between all pairs' perceptions of these respective positions.

After comparing each pair's results for congruence of their matching of their respective D and S quadrants, I combined all the pairs' data to create a more comprehensive image of each group's results. This amassing of the data has no connection with the actual use of the CS model in practice, but it achieves the analytical goals of identifying overall trends and/or patterns of CCTs' and teacher-interns' views and behaviors with respect to the ongoing mentoring process.

At the third internship workshop of the program (at Week 11) I administered a second set of surveys identical to those completed at Week 6, except that each pair selected their four positions on the grids according to where each partner was after five weeks of practicing the oral questioning skills. This second set of surveys was processed in the same manner as the first. Finally, I analyzed both sets of data in order to compare the similarities and differences of matchings between the pre- and postpractice sets for each pair and for the entire group of 70 pairs. The purpose of this analysis was to ascertain the effect of the CS model on CCTs' understanding and implementation of the supervisory practices over the five-week period with respect to the development of the interns' questioning skills. I thus sought to determine (a) the extent to which all the CCTs (as a group) were successful at correctly determining the interns' developmental levels for oral questioning, and (b) the extent to which all the CCTs (as a group) were able to match appropriately their S styles to these D levels.

This macro analysis was conducted in order to derive a composite picture of some of the effects of CS as a supervisory tool, although the CS model was designed solely for use at the micro level by one mentor with his or her protégé.

To arrive at a set of group rankings for the Week 6 and Week 11 data, I calculated four arithmetic means for each of the four subgroups of quadrant ratings: (a) the mean of the CCTs' self-ratings of their own supervisory positions on the S grid; (b) the mean of the interns' ratings on the CCTs' supervisory styles on the S grid; (c) the mean of the interns' self-ratings of their own developmental-level positions on the D grid; and (d) the mean of the CCTs' ratings of the interns' developmental-levels on the D grid. Then, for Week 6 and for Week 11 the two means (one mean from the interns' ratings, and one from the CCTs' ratings) representing both subgroups' views of where they

placed each other were combined to given an overall mean ranking of the general positions of interns' development level and CCTs' supervisory style.

Finally, for both the Week 6 and the Week 11 data I calculated the degree of match (in percent) for each cohort between individuals' self-rankings and their partners' rankings of them on the respective grids. I made this calculation by first determining the number of pairs who had ranked each other in the same numerical quadrant; then I calculated the number that were either ranked higher or lower by their partners as compared with their self-rankings. For example, I tabulated how many pairs in each cohort agreed that the D level of the intern was D1, D2, D3, or D4. Then I counted how many CCTs ranked their interns higher or lower on the D grid than their interns ranked themselves. Similarly, I tabulated how many pairs agreed that the S style of the CCT was S1, or S2, or S3, or S4. Similarly, I calculated how many CCTs ranked themselves higher or lower on the S grid than their interns ranked them.

In order to triangulate these findings, I compared them (a) with my own supervisory assessments, as recorded on four monthly evaluation documents that I recorded for each teacher-intern when I visited each pair in their respective schools; and (b) with my personal reflections and notes regarding the supervisory process that I observed between each CCT and intern.

I found that the pairs' rankings of each other on the respective D and S grids at Week 5 and at Week 11 corresponded to my own assessments of each intern's developmental level(s) and to my judgments of each CCT's mentorship style(s) that I observed during my meetings with each pair in their schools and at the internship inservices.

The congruence among the respective positionings by the triad for the intern's D level in oral questioning was further corroborated by comparing these positions with the teacher-intern's formal midterm and final evaluation documents, each of which included assessments of his or her intern's oral questioning skill. Similarly, the formal assessments of the intern's performance in oral questioning generally mirrored the respective evaluations that identified his or her competence and confidence in conducting these practices during teaching.

Findings

All these data are presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3. The general results that can be inferred from the data are similar to the findings reported both in the earlier CS studies (Ralph, 1994c, 1996, 1998), and in other related research on supervisors' leadership styles (Glatthorn, 1990).

One general finding observable from the data displayed in Table 1, similar to that from earlier studies, was that supervisees as a group demonstrated growth in their oral questioning skills from Week 6 to Week 11, as shown by the increase in both subgroups' rankings of the interns' developmental levels over the five-week period. Similarly, CCTs exhibited corresponding advancement in their own supervisory styles over the period. However, the pairs' mean rankings of the CCTs' supervisory styles were generally lower on the CS grids than were the mean plottings of interns' developmental levels. For example, at Week 11 the mean of the CCTs' style was 2.73—located in the S2 quadrant, whereas the mean of the interns' level was 3.31—located in the D3 quadrant. Thus it seems that there was a tendency for CCTs as a group to do what

Niehouse (1988b) described as overleading, a situation where the supervisor at a particular time tends to use a higher degree of task or directive response (i.e., at S2) than is actually called for by the novice's existing developmental stage (i.e., at D3, where the higher intern competence level calls for a lower mentor task response).

Supervisors overemphasizing such a task-orientation style may cause the protégé to view the mentor as being too restrictive or domineering by not recognizing the former's higher level of competence to do the task. Consequently, the hard feelings or resentment that may arise in such situations could be prevented if supervisors would adjust their leadership style according to the contextual variable of the relationship, that is, reduce their telling task-oriented behavior when supervisees gain competence in the skill being practiced.

A second general finding observable from a comparison of the data in Tables 2 and 3 was that the CCTs as a group appeared to grow in their ability to apply the CS model with greater discriminatory precision over time. The greater consistency in match of partners' plottings on the grids is evident by Week 11. A further explanation for this improvement in consistent matching could also lie with the increase in supervisees' accuracy both in their own self-assessments and in their discernment of the effectiveness of the mentors' supervisory behavior toward them.

Correspondingly, from Week 5 to Week 11 there was a general decrease in pairs' mismatching of their respective plottings of the quadrant positions. These findings are similar to those revealed in the earlier CS studies (Ralph, 1993, 1996, 1998).

With respect to supervisors adjusting their supervisory styles to match their interns' developmental level at Week 6 (see Table 1), there was a relatively close alignment: a mean of 2.76 in the D2 quadrant of interns' questioning skills was nearly matched by a mean of 2.61 in the S2 quadrant. That is, the interns as a group reflected relatively low competence and low confidence with the questioning performance, and the supervisors on the whole reciprocated with

Table 1
Change of Participants' Respective Grid Positions in the CS Quadrants
(*n*=70 pairs)

	Mean Rankings by		
	Interns	CCTs	Both
<i>Week 6</i>			
Interns' developmental level	2.45	3.06	2.76
CCTs' supervisory style	2.61	2.60	2.61
<i>Week 11</i>			
Interns' developmental level	3.36	3.26	3.31
CCTs' supervisory style	2.81	2.64	2.73

Note. The values represent the cohorts' mean numerical rankings of participants' self- and partner-plotted positions in the quadrants of the two CS grids. (The instructional skills being learned were teacher-interns' oral questioning and responding.)

a correspondingly high degree of both task and supportive response to counter their protégés' lagging development in this area.

A closer analysis of the data in Table 1 suggests that at Week 11 supervisors in general would need to adjust their existing S2 style upward to reach S3 on the grid in order to accommodate supervisees' D3 (3.31) developmental level. Mentors would thus need both to reduce their task orientation and to maintain their then-current relatively high level of supportive behaviors. That adjustment would change their supervisory style from the actual S2 (2.73) to the required S3 style, thereby more closely matching the supervisees' existing D3 level at Week 11.

I now turn to a discussion of selected findings drawn from the data that reveal the mismatches between respondents' ratings (see Tables 2 and 3). In Table 2 the fact that 24% of CCTs rated themselves lower on task (or higher on supportive) behaviors than their interns rated them also confirms what earlier research has reported: that experienced teachers typically prefer using more of a *human* (i.e., S3 and S4) than a directive supervisory style when working with other adults (Dalzell, 1997; Glatthorn, 1990; Ralph, 1993, 1994b, 1996, 1998).

At the same time, however, the fact that 20% of CCTs rated themselves higher on task orientation at Week 6 than their interns rated them needs to be interpreted in the light of the participants' unique perspectives. For example, many interns by Week 6 of the practicum may have experienced what researchers have identified as a stage of disillusionment or a morale dip at the D2 level. Here many novices experience the reality shock associated with confronting the difficulties of real-world teaching practice (Blanchard et al., 1987; Ralph, 1993, 1994a, 1996). At this stage, according to the CS model, supervisees' low competence and low confidence in a skill requires mentors to respond with a reciprocal S2 leadership style where the supervisor provides a coupling of high task and high encouraging supervisory response to bolster the interns' low level of performance.

Consequently, CCTs implementing this S2 style for the oral questioning skills would tend to perceive themselves as being more explicit and directive in their guidance of their interns than they would be in their generally preferred, more supportive S3/S4 styles. The inexperienced interns, on the other hand,

Table 2
Degree of Match Between Individuals' Self- and Partner-Plotted Quadrant Locations on the CS Grids, Initial Session (Week 6)

<i>CCT supervisory-style grid</i>	
Consistent match between partners' plottings	56
CCTs plotted selves higher on tasks (or lower on support) than did interns	20
CCTs plotted selves lower on task (or higher on support) than did interns	24
<i>Intern developmental-level grid</i>	
Consistent match between partners' plottings	53
Interns plotted selves higher than did CCTs	7
Interns plotted selves lower than did CCTs	40

Note. The values represent percentages of the 70 pairs. Sums may not total 100 due to rounding.

would tend not to view an S1 or S2 response as being too directive for them at that point. They would in fact welcome it as providing needed guidance to help them raise their reduced competence in their delivery of oral questioning. In other words, because the individuals involved in the supervisory process tend to interpret situational events according to their own prior experiences and existing beliefs, the often quoted principle of maintaining clear, open, and ongoing communication between or among partners not surprisingly becomes a critical ingredient to the success of the entire mentoring relationship.

With respect to the mismatched ratings of interns' developmental levels—shown in the lower portion of Table 2—that 40% of the interns rated themselves lower than their CCTs rated them—also appears to reflect what previous research has consistently found: that beginning teachers tend to be preoccupied with survival and self-concerns until their confidence and skill levels begin to be developed through professional experience (Ralph, 1998; Zimpher & Grossman, 1992). Furthermore, at Week 6 the CCTs were still relatively inexperienced with the “new” CS model and were not as skillful at discerning their protégés' levels of confidence and competence because the CS model had just been presented to them that day. The supervisors may have based their judgments more on observations of the interns' outward behavior (i.e., competence and technique) and less on appraising their inner feelings, anxieties, and concerns.

With respect to participants' rankings of their own and their partners' respective performances at Week 11 (see Table 3) there was greater agreement for their locating of interns on the development grid (81%) than there was for their locations of the supervisors on the style grid (66%). Because the internship is precisely that—a program designed for teacher-interns to develop professionally—it is logical to assume that most attention by all participants would be paid to helping interns to improve their teaching skills. Hence closer agreement on the interns' general rate of progress (i.e., on the D grid) would tend to exist.

Although two thirds of the participants agreed that the CCTs' styles matched appropriately the interns' developmental levels in their oral questioning skills, the fact that 14% of the CCTs saw themselves as being too directive (or less supportive) in their supervisory behavior could also be reinterpreted

Table 3
Degree of Match Between Individuals' Self- and Partner-Plotted Quadrant Locations on the CS Grids, Final Session (Week 11)

<i>CCT supervisory-style grid</i>	
Consistent match between partners' plottings	66
CCTs plotted selves higher on task (or lower on support) than did interns	14
CCTs plotted selves lower on task (or higher on support) than did interns	20
<i>Intern developmental-level grid</i>	
Consistent match between partners' plottings	81
Interns plotted selves higher than did CCTs	4
Interns plotted selves lower than did CCTs	15

Note. The values represent percentages of the 70 pairs. Sums may not total 100 due to rounding.

from the interns' perspective. That is, this finding could be reconceptualized by stating that 14% of the interns saw their CCTs as being less directive (or overly supportive) than the interns expected or desired them to be at that point in the practicum. For example, an intern could still be at a D1 or D2 level in his or her questioning skills, thus needing a reciprocal S1 or S2 style, but instead receiving a mismatch with an S3 or S4 (i.e., high support) response from the CCT. Thus in this case the CCT could legitimately be encouraging the intern to demonstrate greater autonomy, a stage that most interns reach near the end of the practicum. However, because the supervisee may not have yet reached that D3 or D4 level, the mentor would be remiss in applying a higher style than that required by the intern at that juncture. Such mismatching could evoke the type of reactions quoted at the beginning of this article: bad feelings, blaming, and misunderstanding.

Correspondingly, the finding shown in the top portion of Table 3 that one fifth of the CCTs perceived themselves as being less directive (or too supportive) in their supervision could be alternatively conceptualized. This reinterpretation is that 20% of the interns at Week 11 saw their CCTs as being too directive (or not as supportive) as called for by the interns' current developmental level. In this case an intern could be at a D3 or D4 level, thus requiring reciprocal S3 or S4 style (i.e., the mentor giving less direction).

With respect to the data shown in the lower portion of Table 3, nearly one fifth (i.e., 4% plus 15%) of the supervisors were still mismatching their leadership style with their interns' developmental level. Similar to how the findings shown in the upper portion of Table 3 were reinterpreted, those data in the lower section could be restated according to the CCTs' perspective.

Thus for the middle line, 4% of the CCTs ranked their interns lower in their development of oral questioning skills than the interns rated themselves. In these cases the CCTs may have believed that the interns had been overly optimistic or too simplistic in their own self-ratings for conducting effective oral questioning. Perhaps the supervisors' broader range of professional experience and wisdom of practice may also have tempered their overall assessment of the interns' performance. The interns (in this 4% category) may have seen themselves as accomplishing the task in the immediate and technical sense (of attaining the mechanical goals of questioning); whereas the CCTs (when assessing their interns' oral questioning skills) may have concentrated more on the holistic nature of the teaching as encompassing more than the mere performance of a series of discrete instructional behaviors. As a result, they may have rated their interns less generously than the latter rated themselves.

Similarly, the last line in Table 3 could alternately be restated as: 15% of the CCTs perceived their interns to be better in their questioning skills than the interns rated themselves. In this subgroup the interns' levels of confidence and competence were lower than the CCTs thought they were (or perhaps wanted them to be).

Thus although the data in Table 3 indicate that most of the mentors were functioning appropriately in terms of the matching of supervisor style with supervisee development (66% and 81%), there was still a substantial degree of mismatching.

All the past research on the CS model concludes that in the case of the teacher-internship program and its policies, the onus for correcting this misalignment of supervisory styles lies logically and morally with the supervisors and the program organizers.

With respect to the data shown in Table 3, a reasonable summary question might be: If CS research shows that the model is generally effective, why were the Week 11 matchings between partners' grid plottings not all consistent?

Possible explanations for this discrepancy may be that: (a) certain individuals and/or pairs may have been uninterested in using the CS model; (b) they may have misunderstood it; (c) they may have been unable to apply it; (d) they may have devalued it; (e) they may have been satisfied with their traditional supervisory practice; or (f) other contextual variables may have been at work that were not included in the scope of the data collection methodology used for this study. It may have also been that the college supervisor was not as effective as he could have been in initially presenting the CS model at the inservices so as to provide all participants with enough sound evidence of its benefits or enough coaching on its application during subsequent school visits. Also, some of the mismatching may have been influenced by a perception voiced publicly at one of the cohort workshops by one of the 1997 cohort participants, for example, that the CS model was simply "another university-type fad ... it is too complicated ... most of us do this anyway ... without all the university jargon."

The variance in the data shown in the lower portion of Table 3 may also be related to differences between the teaching perspectives of experts and novices. Related research (Ralph, 1994c; Shulman, 1987) has demonstrated that experienced veterans in education tend to be more reality-oriented and automatic in their monitoring of classroom routines, and also that they tend to be less idealistic regarding daily classroom life than are the novice teacher-interns. These differences in perceptions may have accounted for the variations in participants' ratings of their own and their partners' respective practice related to the teacher-interns' learning of questioning skills.

Implications and Discussion

The recent research on the application of CS in the supervision of teacher-interns from 1994 to 1998 has generally confirmed earlier findings that supported the usefulness of the model in helping mentors to assist teacher-interns in their professional development. Supervisees were helped to improve their oral questioning skills, and supervisors were helped to develop their overall supervisory skills, especially when they realized the importance of adjusting their leadership styles to match their protégés' levels of development.

In this synthesis of the results of using the CS approach, one crucial issue that emerged (and that should be addressed in future research) relates to the fundamental assumption undergirding the CS model. This question relates to the extent to which mentors are capable of changing their leadership style in actual practice. Elsewhere (Ralph, 1996, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1979) arguments have been presented both for and against being able to change one's leadership style at will. An assumption of the CS model is that educators in fact are able to vary their mentoring style because of their well-honed skill to perform publicly by adopting a variety of leadership roles necessitated by the context of a

particular teaching-learning moment—whether or not they may particularly relish doing so.

Ultimately, the basic principle of lifelong learning itself provides support for the fact that professionals are able to internalize new knowledge and skills—especially when they see value in improving their own professional practice (Fullan, 1991). What has been found to be advantageous about CS, and which has practical implications for supervisors and mentors in other fields, is that it does have potential in assisting both supervisors and supervisees to improve their respective professional skills. However, it is the responsibility of supervisory program leader(s) to be able to provide participants with convincing and persuasive evidence as to the value and relevance of the CS approach. If participants in an innovative initiative see personal benefit from using the innovation in their work, the research literature suggests that they will tend to “buy in” and become advocates of the initiative (Fullan, 1991, 1997; Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987; Watt, 1998). The research on CS suggests that the model does have potential as one such initiative.

Notes

1. The contextual Supervision Model was adapted from Blanchard, Zigarmi, and Zigarmi (1987); Carew, Parisi-Carew, and Blanchard (1986); Glickman (1990); Niehouse (1988a, 1988b); and Sergiojanni and Starratt (1988). Permission to use copyright material has been granted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, copyright 1987. All rights reserved. Parts of Figure 1 are also reprinted with permission from the *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 39, p. 285, 1993; and with permission from the *Journal of Teacher Education*, 45(4), September-October, 1994; and with permission from the *Canadian Administrator*, 35(3), p. 2, 1996.
2. The extended practicum program in which each study's participants were engaged is a 16-week internship for fourth-year BEd students. Approximately 300 to 400 students per year are placed with classroom cooperating teachers in schools throughout the province. A faculty supervisor from the college is assigned to groups of 20 to 25 pairs in an area and conducts three monthly seminars with the group, as well as four or five supervisory visits with each pair throughout the period.

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