Enhancing Aboriginal Teacher Education: One Promising Approach

Edwin G. Ralph
University of Saskatchewan

The preservice preparation of Aboriginal teachers has grown in importance in Saskatchewan in recent years. This study describes how one extended practicum supervisor with the University of Saskatchewan used the Contextual Supervision (CS) model during his internship duties with several Aboriginal teacher interns and their cooperating teachers. The purpose of his application of CS was to assess its effectiveness, and to validate its actual use, in that context. The findings, consistent with evidence accumulating from a modest number of studies of CS, suggest that the model has definite potential to improve the supervisory process with Aboriginal neophyte teachers.

Introduction

Saskatchewan Natives eventually will control their own education system—it's just a matter of time ... We're coming on, we're not going to be stopped. Our enrolment is going up and theirs (the provincial system's) is dropping. They better start thinking about how they can relate to us. (Braden, 1993a)

This recent statement by David Ahenakew, a former chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, reflects one facet of the current attitude of Aboriginal[1] leaders toward appropriating what they view as their rightful position in Canadian society. Believing that the historical "asymmetry, inequality, and domination" imposed on them by federal and provincial governments must be reversed (Devrome, 1991), First Nations leaders advocate establishing complete control of their schooling system, including curriculum, teacher certification, and educational standards. However, "these standards," stated one Aboriginal advisor, "would be consistent with provincial ones so Native students still could be competitive with 'the outside world.' But the standards would have a different focus" (Braden, 1993a).

Until such changes are enacted, however, I believe that the ongoing challenge for the province's institutions responsible for preparing teachers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, will be to respect these educational aspirations and to collaborate with Native educators to explore ways to initiate these planned changes in preservice programs. Moreover, while pursuing this goal, we at the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, must at the same time be sensitive to nurture, and *not* to hinder, the positive and unique relationship between Aboriginal groups and teacher education that has already been carefully built up during the past 30 years (Regnier, 1992).

Assuming, as reported repeatedly in the teacher education literature (Zahorik, 1988; Zeichner, 1992), that the extended practicum[2] is a key component of teacher preservice preparation, I argue in this article that the practicum experience of

Aboriginal teacher interns[3]—and by extension their entire BEd program—can be enhanced by the implementation of Contextual Supervision (CS) (Ralph, 1991b).

I advocate CS as a useful model for helping practicum supervisors (both cooperating classroom teachers and university personnel) to conceptualize the leadership process and to guide their supervisory practice. I derive the rationale for this advocacy stance from three sources: (a) CS supports the current thinking in the reform of teacher education and supervision; (b) it facilitates the pursuit of contemporary goals of Aboriginal education; and (c) it has been validated in recent supervising practice with Aboriginal practicum students.

The Saskatchewan Scene

As I have indicated elsewhere (Ralph, 1991b), Saskatchewan, the sixth largest (in area) of Canada's 10 provinces, has the nation's highest per-capita Aboriginal population (Hope, 1989). Moreover, the projected K-12 Aboriginal student enrollment in Saskatchewan by the turn of the century ranges from 40% to 50% of the total enrollment (McDonald & Anderson, 1993; McMahen, 1991; Morris, 1991), but only an estimated 4% of teachers will be Aboriginal. Yet today not all Native students attend band schools. Although 64 of the province's existing 72 bands operate their own schools (within provincial guidelines), and although approximately 11,000 Aboriginal students are enrolled in these band-operated schools, still nearly 19,000 Native students attend other schools. Some 4,000 of these receive financial support from their bands to attend nonurban schools, while the other 15,000 are enrolled in schools in urban centers (Braden, 1993a).

Logically, then, teacher education in Saskatchewan will need to pursue two goals in the next few years: to recruit and prepare more teachers of Aboriginal descent and to ensure that *all* preservice teacher graduates are appropriately prepared to teach in settings where Aboriginal pupils attend (Braden, 1993b; Hoffman, 1992). Despite certain paradoxes in Native education (such as the movement to band-operated schools vs. a trend whereby Native students are increasingly attending non-Aboriginal schools, or the reality that band "operation" of a school does not necessarily mean band "control," Urion, 1992, p. 3), I believe, as articulated by Hope (1989), that, as teacher educators in Saskatchewan, we are morally and professionally obligated to work in partnership with Aboriginal leaders to help graduate more teachers from our program who will be able to address these issues in the daily life of their schools.

Historically, our College of Education has offered Aboriginal teacher education for nearly 30 years, and also has the privilege of being the only teacher education institution in Canada affiliated with three unique Aboriginal teacher education programs (TEPs, Littlejohn & Regnier, 1989). However, a specific demand currently being raised by supporters of the TEPs is that Aboriginal student teachers in the College's program, which is currently being revised, be treated equitably with non-Aboriginal students. The key concern, which has direct implications for our extended practicum component, and which is also supported by the wider literature in Aboriginal teacher preparation, relates to the "quality and equality" issue of our Aboriginal preservice component. That is, the main goal of the TEPs is to maintain a balance between providing teacher education that is as vigorous as the "standard program," but that also provides for the distinctive context of Aboriginal traditions and culture (Timmons, 1990; University of Saskatchewan, 1992). Some Aboriginal teacher interns may require a longer time to complete the

BEd degree requirements due to prior academic deficiencies and/or financial, social, or psychological barriers. Consequently, TEPs supporters advocate that specific provisions be made for these students such as mature entrance, tutoring, counseling, upgrading, study-skills programs, coaching and support, course loads being spread over longer period (with corresponding extension of financing plans), and employing instructors' supervisors "who are culturally responsive or sensitive to these variables" (McDonald & Anderson, 1993; Regnier, 1992, p. 2). Critics of TEPs, on the other hand, assert that these provisions may dilute the quality of the BEd degree, or that a form of reverse discrimination may result because of what is perceived as special treatment and partiality toward Aboriginal teacher interns (McAlpine, Cross, Whiteduck, & Wolforth, 1990; Ralph, 1991b).

However, if one accepts the premise that the goal of the extended practicum is to promote the personal and professional development of *each* teacher intern, then I argue that supervisors' implementation of CS will not only help satisfy the "quality and equality" demand for the TEPs, but will do so in a way that *each* participant in the supervisory process will find both sensible and sensitive (Ralph, in press).

What is CS?

Contextual Supervision is an adaptation of the original Situational Leadership (SL) approach created by Hersey and Blanchard (1988), which had widespread appeal in management and administrative practice and literature during the 1970s and early 1980s (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988). I derived the CS model for use in the supervision of teaching, by applying a key tenet of SL to teacher development, which is that if supervisors during the supervisory process will synchronize their leadership style to match a supervisee's level of development in a particular skill, then each partner will experience professional growth: the supervisor in leadership skills; and the supervisee in the specific task being practiced.

In CS a *supervisor* is any experienced educator who takes the role of helping a supervisee to improve in a specific professional competency or skill; and a *supervisee* is a colleague engaged in a collaborative relationship with the supervisor in order to develop a specific professional practice. Because CS provides for this continual professional growth of *all* educators, "reciprocal role exchange" is encouraged, in which participants are free to explore the switching of supervisor-supervisee roles on occasion. The purpose is for all educators involved in the supervision of teaching—each with a unique range of development levels in a variety of professional tasks—"to interact in the context of actual teaching problems and try to understand those problems in terms of the circumstances in which they arise" (Heaton & Lampert, 1993, p. 55). However, CS is particularly useful in supervising beginning teachers during their early careers (Ralph, 1992, 1993b).

In a progression of studies, I have applied, adjusted, and refined the CS model in my work as a college supervisor with teacher interns during their preservice extended practicum experiences. Through a series of reports on this research over the past three years, I have delineated some key findings about the CS model, a brief summary of which are as follows:

1. CS has evolved. Several adjustments and improvements have been made to the original SL model (and thus to CS) in order to narrow the gap between su-

pervisory "theory" and actual "practice" (Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Zigarmi, 1987; Carew, Parisi-Carew, & Blanchard, 1986; Ralph, 1991b).

2. The graphic representation of the CS model has undergone progressive redesign, from one having a relatively static appearance (Ralph, 1991a) to one portraying more action and flexibility (Ralph, 1993a). Moreover, it has been revised to balance the prescriptive and the descriptive elements (Ralph, 1993b), and to incorporate strengths of some contemporary supervisory approaches, while also reducing their weaknesses (Ralph, in press).

3. CS, although certainly capable of being misused, abused, or wisely used, like any method in the social sciences, has not only been shown to help participants more clearly conceptualize the supervisory process and its difficulties, but it also offers to members in the supervisory relationship practical guidance in their professional decisions (Ralph, 1992-1993). Although I have described the CS model elsewhere (e.g., Ralph, 1991b, 1992, 1993a, in press), I have not done so with "organic symbolism" as I do in this article.

In this study, I symbolize the CS model using the metaphor of a tree (See Figure 1). This metaphor is in keeping with the Aboriginal world view that values oneness with nature, and the balance and unity of all of creation (Barman, Hébert, & McCaskill, 1986; Kirkness, 1992a, 1992b), in which distinctions between such concepts as the "ideal" and "real," the "ought" and "is," "teaching" and "learning," "past" and "present," "spiritual" and "secular," and "humanity' and "nature" are reconceptualized and blended together holistically and harmoniously (Akan, 1992; Battiste, 1986). Moreover, the tree metaphor is consistent with the Sioux tradition, for instance, of considering a flourishing tree as the living center of "the Sacred Hoop of the nation" (Kirkness, 1992b): a symbol of cyclical growth and life.

As depicted in Figure 1, CS too may be conceptualized as a living and growing organic entity because the supervisory process deals with humans communicating and interacting in changing contexts, rather than being viewed merely as a mechanical imposition of prescriptive techniques by external agents.

The Roots

Just as a tree's root system provides anchoring and nourishing functions through its contact with the earth, so is CS rooted in fundamental human values, accepted almost universally by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, such as mutual understanding and respect, self-reliance, and social responsibility (Kirkness, 1992a). As shown in Figure 1, the two foundational values undergirding CS, which characterize basic human morality as identified by Frankena (1973) and Sergiovanni (1992a), are *justice* (the fair treatment of, and the respect for, the integrity of individuals) and *beneficence* (the virtue devoted to the welfare of the person(s) being served). Just as a tree's growth and vigor depends on its root system's ability to absorb and transport nutrients, so too does CS's effectiveness depend on participants' actions, flowing from their underlying values, beliefs, and attitudes about teaching, learning, supervising, and human life in general. One's values determine one's actions. Moreover, to benefit from CS consistently in actual practice requires supervisory partners to engage in what Peck (1993) describes as "consciously motivated organizational behavior" (p. 26). He indicates that children are not born with natural predispositions toward civility, but rather, as maturing social creatures, we must deliberately develop and learn to use our free will to decide to interact on the basis of such values as beneficence and respect.
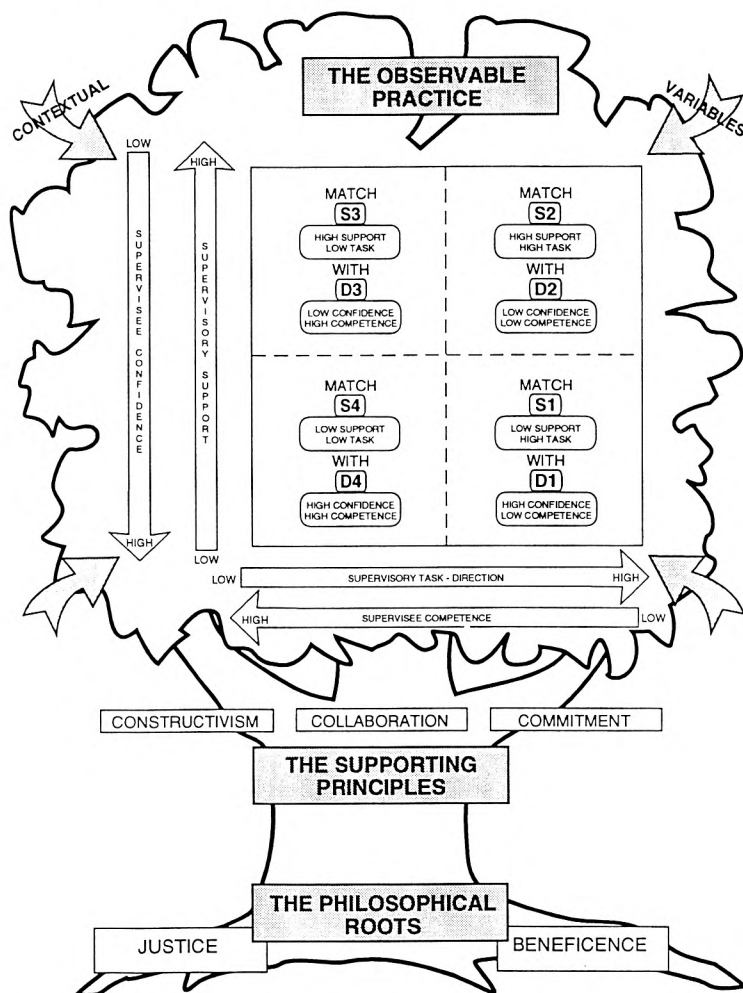
Figure 1. Contextual Supervision (from Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Zigarmi, 1987; Carew, Parisi-Carew, & Blanchard, 1986; Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Niehouse, 1988a, 1988b; Ralph, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1992-1993, in press; Sergiovanni, 1992a; 1992b) (permission to use copyright material has been granted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, copyright 1987. All rights reserved).

This decision to build one's existence on such basic beliefs is consistent with Aboriginal epistemology as stated by Akan (1992) in her analysis of Saulteaux elders' beliefs:

Education, which is concerned with the character formation or development of youth, involves the making of human beings ... to have a good sense of right and wrong and to be able to act on that knowledge. (p. 194)

Regarding the use of the CS model in the supervision of teacher education, an important goal in practicum reform relates to a growing demand for moral and

ethical considerations to be prominent, and for professional virtue, mutual respect, cooperating, and caring to be manifest by all supervisors (Kirschenbaum, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1992a). CS is an approach that is established on these philosophical underpinnings, and that supervisors may use to reduce the possibility of injustice occurring as they fulfil their dual supervisory-evaluatory roles (Ralph, in press). Thus, because the focus of CS is on helping *individuals* to develop, rather than on forcing a "one size fits all" model on each student teacher, then the TEPs' pursuit of the "equal does not mean the same" objective is promoted (Regnier, 1992). In fact, I have found in my own personal use of the CS model during my supervisory work with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teacher interns and their CCTs that, rather than engendering a stereotypical view of Aboriginal interns, I tended to focus on the consideration of *each* participant as unique with a specific personality and professional strengths and weaknesses. Based on this experience with CS, I affirm, with Wiesenberg (1992, p. 82), that "individual differences were as important as Native/non-Native differences."

The Trunk and Branches

Just as a tree's trunk and main branches provide support, stability, and connection, so the CS model has three supporting principles that, like branches, provide a connective structure between CS's fundamental root values and the partners' daily supervisory practice, the latter being the visible "fruit," that is, the observable supervisory interactions. See Figure 1.

CS's three supporting principles that serve as structural guides to actual supervisory practice are the three "Cs": three prominent concepts that repeatedly appear in current teacher education reform literature. The first "C," *Constructivism*, refers in the model to learning by all participants, regardless of their rank or position in the educational field, as a developmental process whereby learners engage in individual meaning making as they seek to solve authentic problems, and to apply to knowledge learned in one setting to different ones (Brandt, 1993; Nolan & Francis, 1992). This provision for individual development is consistent with goals of Aboriginal teacher education, in that beginning teachers are empowered and supported, according to their particular level of development at the time, to expand their personal and creative knowledge based on realistic, relevant experiences in actual school situations with pupils (Braden, 1993b; Haberman, 1991; Reyhner, 1991).

The second "C," *Collaboration*, is also a principle consistent with Aboriginal tradition, which places high value on the immediate and extended family, the local community, and increasingly on larger groups: the band and the First Nations (Poonwassie, 1991). Pride is growing among Aboriginal people worldwide in their unique histories, cultures, and languages. The exercise of collaborative political pressure and demands in Canada have generated significant improvements in First Nations social, economic, and political status locally, provincially, nationally, and internationally. In education, they are tapping the power of collaboration among their own organizations to resolve issues; and they see the advantage of cooperating with all partners involved in education in achieving agreed-on goals (Smyth, 1991). Yet a current attitude among First Nations leaders is that "collaboration" no longer means silent compliance to government mandates. For instance, at a recent conference on provincial education held in Saskatoon, a guest, Alfred Linklater of the Assembly of First Nations in Ottawa, reacted negatively to the

Saskatchewan Education Minister's comments that Sask Ed would be developing more Native curriculum. He said, "The Minister is still talking about developing curriculum for us. She's not saying, 'What do you want and we'll help you do it'" (Braden, 1993a).

Thus the CS principle of collaboration promotes supervisory partners engaging in dialogue, cooperation, and even constructive confrontation, while at the same time guarding against contrived collegiality or token participation (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990) as they seek the ultimate goal of teacher education: helping pupils improve their learning.

Commitment, the third supporting principle in CS, refers to participants' moral and professional obligation to exemplary educational practice in all its facets and at all its levels (Flores, 1988; MacIntyre, 1981). In this vein, Sergiovanni (1992a) reminds supervisory partners, whether supervisors or supervisees, that

School administrators have a special responsibility to share in the professional ideal of teaching, for whatever else they are, they are teachers first. (Indeed, one hallmark of the established professions is the preservation of one's professional identity, no matter how far one rises in the administrative ranks). (p. 55)

Thus commitment to both the *task* and *caring* elements of supervision is an important guiding force in CS. The key to successful supervision is to combine these two dimensions according to the contextual variables characterizing each supervisory event.

The Contextual Variables

In Figure 1, the outer arrows surrounding the tree's foliage represent the complex combination of unique factors influencing each supervisory situation. For Aboriginal teacher education, this intricate web of variables ranges from recent global and national events related to First Nations issues ("Toward Native," 1992), to regional and provincial situations (Purich, 1992), to social and cultural customs (Peeace, 1993), to community and local factors (Braden, 1992), to school and classroom policies (Braden, 1992), and/or to personal and psychological characteristics of the individuals involved (Warden, 1992).

The CS model is not designed necessarily to change these contextual factors, but rather to help participants recognize their effect, and to guide supervisory decision making while taking them into consideration (Ralph, 1992; 1992-1993). For instance, Aboriginal social tradition dictates that a person refrains from controlling or influencing another, but rather that the person promotes personal autonomy and decision making (Bear, 1993; Ryan, 1992). Student teachers holding this belief may experience difficulty in suddenly having to assume an assertive manner in disciplining students during the internship, for example (Ralph, 1992). Similar discrepancies may occur when typical Eurocentric ideals clash with other Aboriginal values such as nonmaterialism, noncompetitiveness, nonintrusion, nonjudgmentalism, or communal life (Tierney, 1991).

The Foliage

Just as flowers, foliage, and fruit (or seeds) exhibit the distinctive features of each species of tree, so the actual conduct of Contextual Supervision in authentic practice provides observable evidence of the CS approach in operation. Similarly, just as a key biological function of the life cycle of trees is to reproduce the species, so

the purpose of CS is to facilitate the professional growth *all* participants involved in the supervisory process.

The square, consisting of the four quadrants embedded in the upper section of Figure 1, represents the observable practice—and the heart of the CS model. This key practice component consists of the synchronization process whereby supervisors adapt their supervisory style (composed of a varying blend of directive or *task* with encouraging or *supportive* behaviors) to match appropriately a supervisee's skill-specific developmental stage (consisting of a particular mix of both competence or *ability* and confidence or *self-assurance* levels) to engage in the particular skill. This *appropriate match* as depicted in the four quadrants of the two-dimension grid in Figure 1, may be conceptualized as the simultaneous application of the two dimensions of supervisory action. One dimension is task direction, to be applied by supervisors in inverse proportion to the degree of supervisee competence to perform the skill being practiced. The other supervisory dimension is supervisor support, to be matched in inverse proportion to the degree of supervisee confidence, in performing the specific task. Four typical combinations of this reciprocal arrangement of task-to-competence and support-to-confidence matches are shown in the foliage section.

For example, in the lower right quadrant, a supervisee at the D1 development level for a specific teaching skill (i.e., having low to moderate competence, but moderate to high confidence) would respond best to an S1 supervisory style. S1 combines high to moderate task orientation (to match the supervisee's lower competence—and resulting need for specific direction and structure), together with moderate to low supportive or encouraging actions (to match appropriately the D1's higher confidence level—which would not require as much collegial support).

In a similar fashion, one may plot the inverse combinations of supervisor style and supervisee readiness levels for the other three quadrants, keeping in mind that the individuals in the supervisory role focus on adjusting their task and supportive responses reciprocally according to the supervisee's respective competence and confidence levels for each professional task. Thus S2 matches D2, S3 matches D3, and S4 matches D4. These four supervisory styles have also been variously labeled by several writers (Glickman & Gordon, 1987; Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Ralph, 1990-1993, in press), where S1 is *Telling* or *Directing*; S2 is *Selling* or *Coaching*; S2 is *Participating* or *Supporting*; and S4 is *Delegating* or *Nondirective*.

How is CS Implemented?

In keeping with the tree metaphor, just as the vigor and fruitfulness of a tree is dependent on the unified interaction of all of its constituent systems, in like manner the effectiveness of CS depends on the users' commitment to its philosophical roots, its supporting principles, and its visible practice. If one agrees with CS's underlying assumptions, concepts, and processes, then its implementation in practice should not be difficult. In fact, Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988, pp. 185-186) affirm that the original Situational Leadership model (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988) from which CS was derived is a useful and well-known construct for understanding and guiding supervision because it (a) has commonsense appeal, (b) is relatively easy to learn, and (c) makes intuitive sense.

Ideally, then, as one implements CS in practice, there is a constant, although often unconscious connection to the "nourishment" derived from the root values of

beneficence, justice, and respect, which will be ultimately displayed in the supervisor's desire to promote genuine personal and professional growth in the supervisee. Thus, as one observes CS in operation, the supervisors' words, actions, gestures, body language, facial expressions, and overall deportment would demonstrate evidence of support of the principles of constructivism, collaboration, and commitment.

An initial step in implementing the CS approach in classrooms is to decide on the objective for the supervision. For beginning teachers, this goal would typically be to help them develop particular professional skill(s). At this time, too, supervisees' actual developmental stage in performing that skill would be determined through such activities as face-to-face discussion, specific questions/answers, and/or observation of the supervisee during classroom teaching. Once the supervisee's readiness level for performing the task in question has been ascertained, supervisors would subsequently adjust the respective combination of their directive and supportive orientations to match reciprocally their partners' specific competence and confidence levels to do the task. Then, as the novice engages in practicing the skill in question in a real teaching or school situation, the supervisor monitors the process, utilizing the appropriate leadership style by adjusting the combination of task/supportive responses in inverse proportions to the learner's development, which generally moves upward during the course of the internship, that is, from D1 through to the D3 and D4 levels.

However, CS also makes provision for a contextual situation that may require supervisors to confront supervisees if the latter have plateaued in their development, or if they do not show the anticipated professional growth. Although CS is an optimistically oriented approach that seeks to build on people's strengths (Ralph, 1991b), its underlying values of justice and beneficence obligate supervisors morally to address situations in which supervisees may have reneged on their commitments. Yet if such constructive confrontation is required, it is conducted positively, fairly, and discreetly; indeed, this action is based on CS's key assumption that the individual's personal and professional development is of central concern (Greenleaf, 1977; Hersey, 1985).

Although the heart of CS practice entails matching supervisory style with task-specific learner readiness, the varying contextual factors will influence the process. Just as environmental conditions affect a tree's growth, situational variables related to Aboriginal teacher education will influence supervisory practice. For example, consideration must be given to First Nations traditions respecting the value of family ties and community cohesion, personal antonomy and individuals' social responsibility, and unassertiveness and nonjudgmentalism (Bear, 1993; Ralph, 1991b; Ryan, 1992). With respect to helping novice teachers to develop their skills in classroom management, I have found in my supervisory work with Aboriginal teacher interns, for instance, that some of them experienced initial difficulty in maintaining a consistently assertive manner with disruptive students in classroom situations (Ralph, 1992). During supervisory conferences, two Aboriginal interns suggested to me that their initial uneasiness about being consistently firm and directive in their internship teaching situations was due in part to a cultural trait whereby Aboriginal childrearing practices tended to reflect "more of a relaxed attitude" and "less of a strictness" or rigidity element, as compared with the non-Aboriginal manner conveyed in some public schools.

In any case, the use of CS per se by supervisors with Aboriginal supervisees, will not excuse the former from ignorance of the unique variables affecting the professional growth of the latter. Indeed, the root values and supporting principles of CS *require* that supervisory personnel take the initiative to build genuine relationships where trust and openness prevail, and where pertinent background knowledge is made available for *all* participants. Thus, with respect to the broader area of teacher education in Saskatchewan, organizers, stakeholders, and individual participants will all need to work at advancing the initiatives already begun provincially: recruiting more Native teachers, providing for upgrading courses for Aboriginals seeking university entrance, increasing financial and counseling support for these postsecondary students, promoting financial and counseling support for them, promoting/advocating Aboriginal interests and successes in academic and nonacademic fields, and eliminating racism (Clemence, 1993; Hoffman, 1992; McDonald & Anderson, 1993; Norris, 1993; Ralph, 1991b).

CS: What Are Some Results of its Application?

The Setting

While performing my duties as an intern supervisor from 1990 to 1993 with 76 teacher interns, 15 of whom were Aboriginal, I applied the CS model, personally and unobtrusively, in my supervisory relationships with the interns and their CCTs. (The 15 CCTs working with these interns were non-Aboriginal.) My goal was to validate the CS model as an effective supervisory approach with a group of Aboriginal interns.

In this section I report some of the findings derived from my own professional implementation of CS during: my formal pre- and postconferences; my informal conversations with partners; my "reflection-in" and "-on" practice (Schön, 1987) during my own supervision; and my selective writing/rewriting and analysis of my observations, reflections, field notes, and intern evaluations related to the teaching/supervising scenarios in which I participated.

I used the CS model initially to help orient myself to and conceptualize each supervisory episode. With ongoing practice, I found, as I grew more familiar with CS's philosophy, guiding principles, and implementation steps, that I was increasingly able to analyze a supervisory situation with relative ease and accuracy. I discovered over the three-year period that CS helped guide my actual decision making with the pairs with whom I worked, because of the general insight and flexible direction that it offered me. This guidance assisted me: (a) to ascertain supervisees' skill-particular development levels; (b) to determine CCTs' supervisory styles; (c) to acknowledge the existence and affect of a web of interconnected, contextual variables influencing each situation; (d) to confirm repeatedly, that supervisory conflicts were often the result of supervisors mismatching their leadership style with their partners' development level; and (e) to verify my hypothesis that CS has potential as an effective supervisory tool in any developmental process.

In this section I synthesize my findings into a single, compressed picture of all of the specific supervisory situations of the 15 pairs, recorded at a specific point in time (the 14th week of the 16-week extended practicum) for a specific teaching dimension (classroom management). The latter was chosen because of its importance to *all* beginning teachers, who typically designate it as a critical element in

teaching effectiveness (Fullan, 1991; Jacobsen, Eggen, & Kauchak, 1993; Valli, 1992).

Before summarizing the findings, I attach several caveats to this component of the study. First, the melding of 15 unique supervisory situations into an "average" picture, although useful for analytical reasons, is not one of the purposes of the CS model. CS's emphasis is on the pair's supervisory relationship. The quantitative analysis of "group norms" is simply my representation of a composite image of where I placed the 15 intern-ship pairs as a whole in terms of their supervisory activity at a single time. Second, this summary reflects my private application of CS and my interpretation of the supervisory scenarios. Participants were not aware of my use of CS and my attempt to validate the model in authentic settings. Third, because these data are based on my personal observations and analyses, to generalize from this single study to other situations would be inappropriate. On the other hand, this report may be viewed as a type of action-research case study that could be considered as a source: (a) to provide information for our institution (and others in similar situations) who may be seeking to enhance Aboriginal teacher education programs; and (b) to suggest further research regarding the CS approach such as providing all CCTs with CS training, then assessing the results of their subsequent supervision, which is a project that has in fact been started (Ralph, 1993a).

A fourth qualification attached to this study relates to the question of isolating Aboriginal interns as a group to be examined. This procedure would seem to run counter to the current teacher internship program at the University of Saskatchewan, where all candidates for the extended practicum are treated equally (although Aboriginal interns do have their own class sections for their prior coursework). For instance, our current internship procedures do provide that: *all* interns are entitled to list their ranked preferences for school placements, almost all of which are granted; college supervisors are randomly assigned to groups of 20 to 30 pairs; all interns receive the same practicum program, print materials, group seminars, and supervisory format; and all interns are evaluated using similar procedures. Therefore, in the light of these "equitable" procedures already in place, it may be argued that to single out and conduct research on one group of Aboriginal interns during the practicum is discriminatory, suggesting that the researcher may be expecting to find "differences," thereby possibly further magnifying a perception that the Aboriginal program is somehow inferior to the regular one. On the other hand, I assert that the purpose for examining the supervision of one group of Aboriginal teacher interns was to show that applying CS—as an "equitable and nondiscriminatory" supervisory tool—would be beneficial in helping novice teachers, regardless of race, to develop professionally. I affirm, according to my three years' supervisory experiences with all of the 76 school-based pairs, that my incorporation of CS continually helped to refocus my attention *more* toward assisting interns *as individuals* to improve their teaching, and *less* toward categorizing them into groups as to race, religion, gender, culture, intelligence, personality, or subjects, grades, or ages taught.

On the basis of my observations during my fourth supervisory visit with each of the 15 pairs, I recorded, according to the CS implementation procedures outlined in the fourth section of this report, above, where each participant of each pair was located on the supervisory grid, with respect to the area of the intern's classroom management skills. I first plotted where I judged the interns to be in the

D1 to D4 quadrants in terms of development level (i.e., the combination of competence and confidence at the 14th week); then I located the CCTs in the S1 to S4 quadrants in terms of their leadership styles with their interns (i.e., the combination of task and supportive behaviors used to help the intern develop classroom management skills) at that time.

After categorizing the 30 participants in the grid system, I calculated the resulting percentages of members located in each quadrant, and then reproduced these results in the bar graph in Figure 2.

The vertical axis in Figure 2 represents the percentages of interns and CCTs who were at specific locations in the four quadrants of the CS grid described earlier in Figure 1. The shaded bars represent the percentages of CCTs exhibiting the various supervisory styles with their interns in relation to interns' classroom management skills during the 14th week of internship; and the white bars represent the percentages of interns who were at each development level at that same time. The horizontal axis indicates the percentages of interns and CCTs in each of the four quadrants, and to what degree the number of individuals in each group were similar (e.g., the number of interns at D1, compared to the number of CCTs at S1).
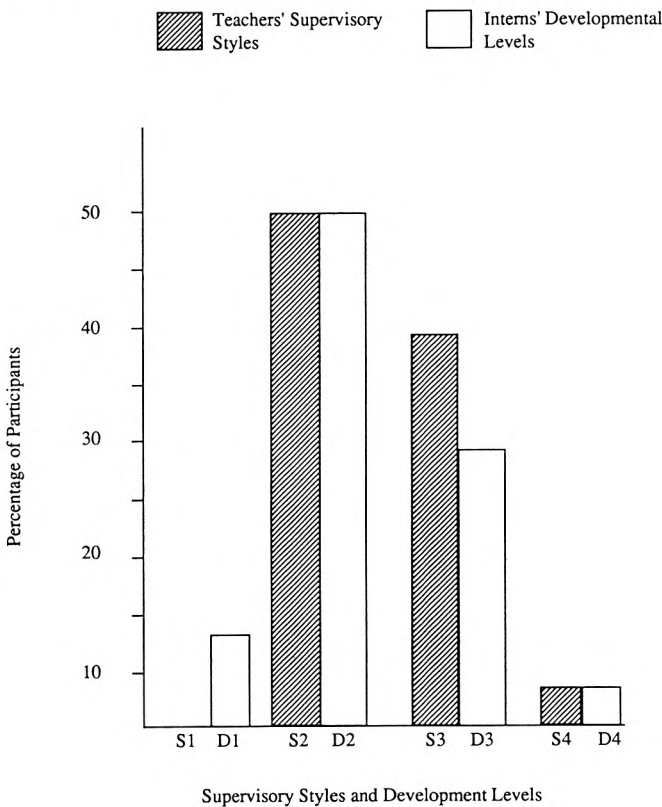

Figure 2. Degree of match between teachers' supervisory styles and Aboriginal interns' development levels for classroom management skills (determined during 14th week of 16-week extended practicum. N=15 supervisory pairs).

The Findings

Ideally, if CS had been the formal model used for all supervision in our extended practicum at the time of this study, and if all participants had been consequently skilled in its application, then one would expect an equivalent match between the number of CCTs using S1 and the number of interns at D1, with similar matchings in the other three quadrants. With respect to the 15 pairs in this study, however, I found that the match between supervisory style and development level was equivalent for only the S2-D2 and S4-D4 quadrants, but not for the first and third. Such a finding is not unexpected, however, because, as indicated above, CS had not been formally introduced to the CCTs, although research on its broader application is in progress (Ralph, 1993a). In fact, a point in favor of making CS a formal component of the internship's supervisory program is that many teachers already appear to be incorporating some of its features intuitively without having had formal CS training. A legitimate question, therefore, is, "How much better could they do if they were to reap the full benefits accruing from a workshop completely familiarizing them with CS and its application?" Moreover, if one accepts that the characteristics of "good theory" are that it "describes, predicts, and explains phenomena, and it guides the practice of those who use the theory" (Zais, 1976, p. 81), then the evidence suggesting that CS appears to provide an accurate description of practicing supervisors, who are untrained in CS and yet who are already using some of its techniques, shows that it does meet the qualifications of sound theory. This fact further bolsters the assertion that the CS approach is worthy of serious consideration for full-scale implementation in our (and others') practicum programs involving Aboriginal student teachers.

A second general finding confirms similar patterns in past research (Glatthorn, 1990; Ralph, in press; Zeichner, 1992), that although the 15 Aboriginal interns were at different developmental stages in classroom management during the 14th week, the majority were at the two lower levels (i.e., 13% at D1, 50% at D2), both of which reflect low competence or skill levels. This finding is not unexpected, because the area of classroom management is one of the greatest concerns for beginning teachers (Evertson & Harris, 1992), particularly for some Aboriginal interns who may have been unaccustomed to highly structured management practices used in many schools. Moreover, the substantial number of interns (50%) at the D2 level (low competence and confidence) during the 14th week also confirms what other research has reported concerning a dip in morale or decline in confidence often experienced by beginning teachers as they pass through the initial "honeymoon period" or novelty phase of a "new class-new teacher" phenomenon, and as they begin to meet the daily challenges and the "reality shock" of the routines of school life (Veenman, 1984).

A third general finding of this study that further supports the results of previous research indicates that experienced teachers on the whole prefer to use (and seem to exhibit naturally) a leadership style that is relatively high in both task and support elements (i.e., the S2 style, Glatthorn, 1990). For instance, 50% of the CCTs used this style with an equivalent number of interns at the D2 level. This CCT preference for avoiding a heavy directive component is further shown by a discrepancy between the quadrant 1 groups where 13% of the interns were at D1 (i.e., low competence, but higher confidence, thereby "requiring" high task structure to make up their relative lack of skill), but where no teacher of the group reciprocated with the S1 style. Similarly, for quadrant 3, the mismatch showing a higher propor-

tion (39%) of CCTs using the S3 style (i.e., low task, high support), than was "called for" by the existing percentage (29%) of interns at the (high competence, low confidence) is also suggestive of the tendency among experienced teachers as a group to avoid a more directive style and to favor the more supportive, human dimension of supervision.

For the participants located in the fourth quadrant, 8% of the CCTs matched their S4 style with an equivalent percentage of interns at the D4 level. In terms of CS theory, these supervisors apparently recognized the interns' high competence and confidence levels in classroom management skills and reciprocated with the S4 delegating style.

Concluding Comments

Condensing the supervisory experiences of these 15 specific cases into a single, "average" picture for the purpose of endeavoring to provide an overview of the general effectiveness of supervision reduces the richness and uniqueness that could have been reported for each situation. Although many details and insights were sacrificed for the sake of arriving at generalizations and of abiding by space limitations I have provided elsewhere elaboration on three of these 15 cases (Ralph, 1991b, 1992, 1992-1993).

Nevertheless, on the basis of the validation of CS in my supervisory duties with 15 Aboriginal interns and their CCTs, I draw some conclusions and implications from this study related to the improvement of extended practicum supervision. First, I believe on the basis of the findings of this study that the CS model would be an effective approach to incorporate *formally* into our own College's ongoing extended practicum program for the benefit of *both* Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants.

I have found—and suggest that further research should be conducted to verify these findings in other contexts—that the CS model helped me as a college supervisor to conceptualize the overall supervisory process more clearly than I was able to do before becoming familiar with the CS approach. Previously I typically tended to follow either (a) a largely unsystematic, see-what-happens approach, often characterized by reactive or trial-and-error decisions, rather than by interactive and proactive reflection; or (b) relatively unsuccessful attempts to implement the precise, prescriptive steps of researchers' abstract and/or complicated supervisory theories (Ralph 1991c, in press). My prior haphazard use of both of these approaches often increased my (and others') confusion and frustration, because such approaches were often inappropriate and limited in scope and/or power to offer adequate supervisory guidance, especially when interpersonal conflicts or professional dilemmas arose in a pairs relationship, whether members were Aboriginal or not.

However, my experience in utilizing the CS model proved to be more satisfactory. Although CS is not a panacea, I found that employing it provided me with a conceptual lens through which I gained a more comprehensive and accurate insight into specific supervisory episodes, and it helped me to identify more readily the contextual factors that facilitated or impeded progress (the latter often being the supervisors' mismatching their styles with interns' developmental stages). I believe that further research and supervisors' actual experiences would support the findings revealed by my studies.

Not only did CS help me identify the roots of supervisory problems, but through its conceptual structure I was consequently able to identify possible solutions to these problems, with respect either to adapting, or suggesting to, or modeling for the CCT a specific change in supervisory supportive or directive behavior. Moreover, what I found helpful was that I could derive these benefits without feeling forced to apply the CS model in a restrictive or prescriptive manner, but rather I was free to use it as a flexible guide, which allowed me to reflect on and select an appropriate blend of task and encouraging strategies to synchronize with interns' and/or CCTs' task-related development levels. With experience, I became increasingly comfortable using the CS principles in a commonsense approach to achieve our program's supervisory goals. I believe that all our supervisors would experience similar benefits if the CS model were incorporated into our supervisory training program in the extended practicum. Because of CS's emphasis on assisting individuals to grow professionally, I found that I repeatedly came back to this goal during my supervisory practice, whether I was working with Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal participants.

Another implication for formally incorporating CS into the internship program relates to refraining from overemphasizing the contextual component of the model (as represented by the four outer arrows in Figure 1) for Aboriginal student teachers. I believe that the purpose of identifying the contextual factors affecting a specific supervisory relationship is *not* to be considered as an end in itself, but is a *means* of explaining reasons behind an individual's actions, which in turn becomes a *means* of determining an individual's skill-specific developmental stage. Then the knowledge of this level becomes the *means* of informing supervisors as to their appropriate combination of task and support response required to achieve what Wiles and Bondi (1991) conclude as the ultimate goal: "The *end* to which all supervision contributes is a better learning experience to aid human development" (p. 85). However, to place the Aboriginal contextual variables as an end rather than as a means to the end, in my view, distorts the purpose of CS and is inconsistent with its supervisory practice. In other words, I would focus my application of CS on instructional, rather than political, goals.

An additional implication drawn from this study related to the inclusion of CS as a permanent part of the practicum program is that a supervisor who is knowledgeable of the model exhibits a willingness and ability to confront supervisory problems when required. Such a supervisor seems to have developed the supervisory skills that reflect the orientations that Fullan and Miles (1992) have identified from their extensive study of the change process in educational organizations. In this vein, I have found through my use of CS in practicum supervision with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interns that I began to incorporate the following propositions derived by Fullan and Miles (1992): (a) to accept member "resistance" as a legitimate concern, not to label it as ignorance or stubbornness; (b) to reframe the basis of this "resistance," so as to identify the real problems (e.g., ambiguous supervisory goals, inappropriate provision of technical skill, or improper levels of support), not to attribute the conflict to a "personality clash" or a "poor attitude"; and (c) to "embrace problems" with a coping style that is "active, assertive, inventive," not to procrastinate, "do it the usual way," or ease off (p. 750). I found that my knowledge of CS expanded my ability to diagnose quickly the typical reasons for conflict in the situation, most of which were due to the misalignment of leadership style with supervisee readiness.

Finally, in response to criticism that this present study is basically a highly prescriptive advocacy statement favoring a mediocre, outdated approach, I lodge a counterargument. On the basis of my three-year experience with CS (through my application, reflection, adaptation, reading/writing, conceptualization, reconceptualization, reapplication, and validation of it with interns and CCTs alike, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), I have provided evidence that:

1. The CS model is first descriptive and then prescriptive: the latter in a positive nonrigid sense, because it clarifies observers' conceptualization of the key elements of supervision, and it offers rational guidelines for actual practice.

2. CS is a conceptual tool, and therefore is morally neutral. The user may misapply it in a superficial or ill-conceived manner and reap mediocre results. However, I argue that CS has been shown to be a productive approach that has potential to facilitate all participants' professional development.

3. I confidently advocate CS's formal implementation into our practicum program (and those of other institutions with similar interests) to be used with all supervisors and interns.

Finally, returning to the tree metaphor, I indicate in this report that CS's strength is due to its underlying theme, rooted in the human values of respect and fairness, that permeates the whole approach. This theme is the commitment by participants to collaborate in facilitating supervisees' professional development beginning at whatever level they are. The benefit of this commitment is that it accepts individuals of any culture, background, or race.

Notes

[1]In this article, *Aboriginal* is synonymous with *Native* and *indigenous*, and includes Indian, Metis, and Inuit people. It is also used synonymously with *First Nations*.

[2]*Extended practicum* here is used interchangeably with *internship* and *practicum*.

[3]*Teacher intern* refers to students in the 16-week extended practicum program offered through the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon. In this article, it is synonymous with *intern, student teacher, novice, neophyte,* or *beginning teacher*.

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