Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation
4(1) 55-71

DOI: 10.1177/2150137812472196
core.sagepub.com

Professional School Counseling Internship: Developmental Assessment of Counseling Skills (CIDACS)

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Abstract

Various professional organizations have called for a standardized, developmental approach to the assessment of the internship experience (e.g., American Counseling Association's call for multicultural competent assessment) and the need for a standardized assessment of internship skill acquisition. In response to these calls and the data collected in this participatory action research study, the authors developed an assessment system to monitor the school counseling trainee's skill development throughout the internship experience—the Professional School Counseling Internship: Developmental Assessment of Counseling Skills.

Keywords

education, speciality, counselor, evaluation, school, assessment, internship

Because assessment of the skills necessary to become an effective professional school counselor is gaining increased visibility in the counseling literature (Schaefle, Smaby, Packman, & Maddux, 2007), the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) has set specific standards to ensure competency and mastery in identified areas of knowledge and skills. An essential aspect of meeting the professional responsibilities set for counselor education programs is "the assessment of student learning and performance on professional identity, professional practice, and program area standards" (CACREP, 2009, p. 7). Along with the standards set by CACREP for the assessment of student knowledge and skills, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) have identified competencies, domains, and proficiencies to be met by students who are entering the field of professional school counseling (ASCA, 2007; NCATE, 2009). The assessment of students' skills based upon these standards is paramount in determining whether students are prepared to begin their role as professional school counselors, as few other mechanisms are in

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Submitted July 30, 2012. Revised November 19, 2012. Accepted November 19, 2012.

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place ensuring the necessary skill development (Steward, Neil, & Diemer, 2008).

A critical point for the assessment of school counselor trainees is the internship experience. CACREP's updated standards state that, "the internship is intended to reflect the comprehensive work experience of a professional counselor appropriate to the designated program area" (CACREP, 2009, p. 16). In essence, the internship is a developmental learning process that helps to integrate information learned in academic courses and in the practicum while participating in the daily responsibilities and tasks of a certified school counselor. Building on a foundation or comprehensive knowledge and skill base, the internship is designed to facilitate the theory-to-practice transition (Baird, 2007).

The internship is comprised of an intense, focused field experience with one hour of individual and/or triadic supervision with the site supervisor weekly, as well as one and one half hours of group supervision a week with the university supervisor. In total, CACREP standards reflect that a 600-hr internship with 240 direct service hours is required. The internship requires students to participate in the daily activities of the school counselor. One requirement of the internship is for the interns to experience or minimally be exposed to the multiple and complex roles and tasks of a school counselor.

In addition to the requirements of the internship experience, ASCA's 2009 role statement highlights the various roles of the professional school counselor for all students' academic, personal/social, and career development needs through a comprehensive school counseling program that values student success. To this end, the skills and knowledge that students learn during their internship experience often vary, as the role of the school counselor varies by school, school day, and time of the academic year.

Developmental Approaches in School Counselor Trainee Assessment

As with most skill acquisition, learning, maintaining, and honing counseling skills is a developmental process (Rigazio-DiGilio, Daniels, & Ivey, 1997). However, few standardized measures have been designed to specifically address the developmental and multifaceted process of trainees' acquisition of the skills and professional identity of a school counselor. Scholars have called for the creation of measures that assess the specific requirements of the counselor's role as well as the developmental aspects of skill acquisition (Granello, 2000; Luke & Bernard, 2006). Such writings suggest that assessment of a counselor-in-training's process should be organized and structured around the developmental aspects of the student skill acquisition and be assessed at significant developmental milestones throughout the internship process.

The etiology of measuring knowledge and skill acquisition are extensive. Developmental perspectives on measuring such acquisition can be traced as far back as Plato in Western Philosophy (Ivey & Rigazio-DiGilio, 2009) to Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956). Recognition of the developmental approach to skill acquisition and counseling supervision gained a foothold in the counselor education field during the 1980s (Borders & Brown, 2005). More recently, Granello (2000) applied a developmental approach to counseling supervision using Bloom's Taxonomy to inform best practice in facilitating the cognitive development of counseling interns. Ivey, Ivey, Myers, and Sweeney (2005) presented the Systematic Cognitive Developmental Supervision model, which provides a framework for providing supervision designed to meet the individual needs of the counselor-in-training. Nelson, Johnson, and Thorngren (2000) integrated the developmental approach to supervision with a discriminative model that addresses the stages of supervision, roles of the supervisor, and various skills/needs of trainees.

Building on the acceptance of the developmental approach to supervision and the need for an integrated developmental/multicultural supervision model, Ober, Granello, and Henfield (2009) presented the Synergistic Model of Multicultural Supervision (SMMS).

This model integrates three important, developmental concepts: cognitive development (Bloom's Taxonomy); interpersonal development (Heuristic Model of Nonoppressive Interpersonal Development); and multicultural awareness/competencies (multicultural counselor competencies—MCCs). This model of developmental supervision is designed to support counselor-in-training skill development within the supervisee's developmental stage and developmental level of multicultural competence. In addition, it provides supervisors with a model to guide the supervision process with particular attention to multicultural counselor competence and to the intern's stage of skill development. Although the SMMS provides a developmental, multicultural model of supervision, this model does not include a measure designed to assess an intern's skill development, knowledge, and multicultural competency across the course of the school counseling internship experience. Such a measure is still needed and can provide further foundation for the expansion of theory, research, and practice in professional school counseling.

A major challenge to assessment in the field of school counseling is not only incorporating the developmental nature of the internship experience but also operationally defining the multiple roles and functions of the school counselor. Thus, assessing the multifaceted and varied knowledge and skills required of school counselors is a complex endeavor. In light of these complexities, establishing a framework for the assessment is essential.

One such framework is the School Counseling Supervision Model (SCSM; Luke & Bernard, 2006), which bridges traditional supervision models with the multiple roles of the school counselors within comprehensive school counseling programs. It also provides a theoretical model for supervision and addresses the complexity of supervising school counseling interns. This model highlights that an important domain of supervising professional counseling trainees is the assessment of interns' skill development within the context of the multiple roles and responsibilities of a school counselor. Building on the recognition of the multiple roles and functions identified in the SCSM, the timing of when trainees are assessed during their internship experience is important. Therefore, assessment of the required skills should be commensurate to the intern's developmental stage (e.g., the assessment should be assessing skills critical to the specific period of the internship experience). A developmental-focused assessment would focus on the progression of skill development, knowledge acquisition, and multicultural competency.

Borders and Brown (2005) and Haynes, Corey, and Moulton's (2003) "Blueprint for Developmental Supervision" provide an overview of three developmental stages throughout the internship. Interns at the early stage demonstrate a basic understanding of the counseling process, tend to be constrained in their interventions, and often lack confidence. Interns at the middle stage demonstrate stronger counseling skills, are more varied in intervention use, and have greater confidence in their ability facilitating the transition from dependency to more independence practice. At the later stages, interns are better able to conceptualize clients and utilize more creative and advanced interventions with the goal of becoming an independent professional. Based on developmental and stage models, the evaluation system developed in this study is a three-phase assessment process.

Scale Development

Scale development theory identifies a three-stage process for developing new measures (DeVillis, 2003; Hinkin, 1998; Netemeyer, Bearden, & Sharma, 2003). The first stage in this process is item generation (Hinkin, 1998). The item generation stage of scale development includes a literature review, examination of existing scales, and input from specialists or experts in the field. Hinkin (1995) writes that "generation of items may be the most important part of developing sound measures" (p. 971). The second stage of scale development consists of the design of a developmental study, scale construction, and reliability assessment. This stage addresses selection of a

representative sample for testing the measure; the wording and valence of the items; number of items in the measure; scaling; appropriate sample size for statistical analysis; and statistical analysis of scale construction and reliability. The final stage addresses scale evaluation which investigates convergent and discriminant validity while further investigating construct validation.

Scale development incorporates both best practices in scale development as well as those in the relevant field. Hence, in addition to the need for a developmental perspective when assessing school counseling interns and the need for efficacious scale development, standards-based assessment is a critical need and has been frequently called for in the educational and counseling literature (Spellings, 2006; U. S. Department of Education, 2006). The Department of Education in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I-A's Guidance on Standards, Assessments, and Accountability requires valid, reliable assessment instruments meet nationally recognized professional standards. *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (1999) are considered a primary resource for these standards (U. S. Department of Education, 2009).

Purpose

Various professional organizations have called for a standardized, developmental approach to the assessment of the internship experience (e.g., American Counseling Association's call for multicultural competent assessment) and the need for a standardized assessment of internship skill acquisition. In response to these calls, this study resulted in the development of an assessment system to monitor the school counseling trainee's skill development throughout the internship experience—the Professional School Counseling Internship: Developmental Assessment of Counseling Skills (CIDACS). The purpose of this study was to develop a comprehensive, developmental, standards-based assessment of counselors-in-training in partnership with professional school counseling site supervisors and counselor educators.

Method

Research Design

The participatory action research (PAR) tradition was used in this study. PAR assists researchers and participants in achieving collective empowerment through an understanding of the functioning and lived experiences of the phenomenon and is based in frameworks of resilience and collaboration (Hays & Wood, 2011). Nastasi, Moore, and Varjas (2004) noted that reflecting on existing theory, research and practice, forming partnerships, and developing formative research are among the critical elements of PAR. At the heart of PAR is collective, self-reflective inquiry in which both researchers and participants invest so that they can understand and improve upon a phenomenon (Hays & Wood, 2011).

This study followed the PAR process: problem identification; reflecting on existing theory, research, and practice; forming partnerships; engaging in formative research; and developing an appropriate model (Hays & Wood, 2011). Problem identification occurred in partnership with site supervisors and counselor educators, followed by reflective inquiry into current research and practice. Data were then collected in two phases. For the first phase, responses were collected from 18 site supervisors on an internship skill development evaluation form adapted from an existing instrument measuring school counselors in the field. In collaboration with the coresearcher participants, data from this phase were analyzed and used to construct the Counseling Internship Developmental Assessment of Counseling Skills (CIDACS; see Appendix). Phase 2 consisted of collecting data about the newly developed measure from 38 site supervisors.

Trustworthiness and Data Analysis

Trustworthiness refers to standards of credibility or to a conceptual soundness with which to

judge the research (Williams & Morrow, 2009). Trustworthiness of this study is demonstrated in the coherence in the purpose of the study, the approach, methods, analysis, and presentation of the results. Triangulation, an awareness of any potential researcher bias, and examination of negative cases were all applied to established credibility of the findings. Peer reviewers were also used to reduce the likelihood of any error throughout the research process (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Concurrent with standards to ensure rigor in a qualitative data analysis, the authors analyzed the data in a series of steps to ensure accuracy in the description of the data and to ensure that the development of the measure had multiple rounds of feedback.

The Researchers

The researchers engaged in critical self-reflection and formed partnerships with school counselors. The first researcher (i.e., first author), a European American, has been a certified professional school counselor since 1993, a certified school psychologist since 1999, and a counselor educator since 2004. She recruited the participants, collected data, and conducted the primary data analysis. She made an effort to be aware of her identity and subsequent biases and declared preexisting assumptions. For example, she believed that the lack of an established, consistent means of assessing the internship was a weakness in counselor education. She also believed that she had biases and values about the participants' experience based on her educational background (e.g., valuing higher education), her occupation (e.g., her beliefs regarding school counseling trainees' development), and the salience of professional development in her own life. The second researcher (i.e., second author) is a White, queer man, had been a faculty member in a school counseling program since 2007, worked as a consultant for three school districts, and contributed to various professional bodies of literature on school counselor training. He consulted with the first author on all stages of the study and reviewed the data analysis process. He had the same biases as the first author, and the two met to talk about their existing assumptions.

Co-researcher Participants

The participants with whom the researchers formed partnerships were 18 on-site supervisors (Phase 1 data collection) and 38 on-site supervisors (Phase 2 data collection) who were evaluating master's level interns. These site supervisors were currently employed as school counselors, held their respective State Department of Education's School Counseling Certification, had a minimum of 5 years experience in the field, and previously supervised interns. Twenty-five of the Phase 2 participants identified as female and 13 as male, and they ranged in years of experience from 5 to 21 years. Participants were recruited by contacting site supervisors affiliated with two university campuses at which the authors had professional contacts. These supervisors supervised interns who were concurrently enrolled in a school counseling program from two large universities in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. One of the universities is a private institution and located in a large urban setting; the other university is a public institution in a rural location.

Sampling methods used with school counseling trainees' populations often reflect a lack of diversity and representativeness found in all samples. Therefore, the researchers used site supervisors associated with two school counseling programs with some differing demographic variables. The first university, located in a large urban setting, in which the schools affiliated with the internship experience differed in terms of size of enrollment, systems of administration, and size of the school counseling program. The second program was located at a university in a rural area with internship experiences in schools that varied greatly in enrollment size (e.g., 300 students to 3,800 students), educational settings and in socioeconomic resources.

In alignment with the PAR research process, the researchers formed partnerships with these supervisors in a variety of ways. Formal meetings and conversation forums occurred at

various points prior to the study over a 2-year period in which the researchers had met the supervisors and discussed issues related to supervision and training. In one of the two university settings, this forum occurred every year during the spring when the site supervisors came to the university, received recognition for their service to the field of school counseling, and spoke to researchers and other program faculty about their thoughts about current topics in the practice of professional school counseling. In the second university setting, this forum took place during the fall semester when the supervisors came to the university to discuss the internship process, speak with the researchers, and consult with other program faculty. Informal meetings prior to the study also occurred in which the researchers met with site supervisors via phone or in-person to discuss evaluation processes. Supervisors often expressed their desire for an evaluation assessment that really reflected what the interns were doing. Many of the assessments that (academic school counseling programs) send are based on more traditional therapy settings, and do not evaluate school counseling interns in a systematic way.

Phase 1

Procedure

The first step was problem identification, done in collaboration with site supervisors and counselor educators. The second step involved fact-finding through prolonged engagement to increase the credibility (Morrow, 2005) of the study by understanding the culture and context of school counseling internship assessment. To do this, the first author investigated current practice for assessing internships through a review of the literature and reviewed the content of 25 university graduate counseling program's websites and/or handbooks. The first author found that a standardized method, or even a widely used approach to evaluation of interns' skill acquisition, was not evident.

Current practice, as indicated by school counseling program internship handbooks and websites, varied widely from a 2- to 4-item qualitative form requesting the site supervisor to identify the intern's strengths and weaknesses to a seven-page evaluation form using a 5-point Likert-type scale. In one example, the evaluation tool asked two open-ended questions (What are the strengths of the intern? What are the areas in need of development?); the form also contained a space for general comments. On another evaluation example, standards based on the skill requirements of the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2005) were listed and the evaluator was asked to rate the intern's ability to achieve each standard on a 6-point Likert-type scale (i.e., *na* [not applicable], *fail*, *needs improvement*, *adequate*, *good*, *excellent*).

Given the lack of a consistently used approach to internship evaluation, resources from professional counseling organizations were sought. The first author investigated assessment tools from professional organizations in order to identify specific areas that needed to be assessed. Sample evaluations were identified for a number of State Departments of Education (e.g., Connecticut, Wisconsin). These evaluations were based on the ASCA School counselor competencies. Another sample performance evaluation form designed to evaluate school counselors in the field was identified (ASCA, 2003). This evaluation was based on the skills required to implement the ASCA National Model. The performance evaluation had 43 items assessing 13 ASCA performance standards. This evaluation form was modified for use with school counseling interns and used for data collection in Phase 1.

Data Collection

Having identified a comprehensive, standards based assessment of school counseling skills, the researchers began to modify the items on the ASCA performance appraisal. The items were modified to appropriately evaluate the skills required throughout internship. The format of the assessment tool, Likert-type scale, and items of the original document remained unchanged wherever possible.

Consistent with the PAR method, 18 on-site counselor supervisors were contacted by the first author and asked if they would participate in the first phase of data collection by providing feedback on the adapted assessment instrument. All 18 supervisors agreed to partner with the researchers. The assessment process was presented and discussed during one of the annual partnership meetings between school counselors and the university. The discussion of the assessment instrument itself (e.g., instead of just recruiting school counselors as participants, the researchers engaged them in the development of the measure) is an essential element in the PAR process; partnering with the participants to establish goals and to identify problems helps all individuals engaged with the research process to feel equal and collaborative. The initial feedback from the site supervisors was positive, specifically with regard to the use of the ASCA National Model as the foundation for the internship assessment instrument. As one counselor said, "we are working at following the ASCA model as we continue to develop our guidance program—so this [partnership in developing an assessment tool] will help that process."

The first author also queried the same supervisors for feedback at the end of the internship that occurred during the same school year. The feedback was gathered through telephone calls and face-to-face interviews. The feedback format was semistructured. Supervisors were asked: Does the assessment instrument appropriately measure the skills developed during the internship experience? Is the instrument user-friendly? What worked or did not work for you or your site?

Results

Feedback from these supervisors indicated that many of the items were not developmentally appropriate. All supervisors identified the following items as developmentally inappropriate for the fall semester evaluation of a school counseling intern: (a) provides support for other school programs; (b) uses data to work with their supervisor to guide program direction and emphasis; and (c) meets with their supervisor and the advisory committee. Three of the supervisors reported that they were not sure what the evaluation form meant by "the advisory committee." Five of the 18 supervisors reported that interns do not facilitate group counseling until the second (spring) semester of the internship experience. Six supervisors reported that opportunities to provide classroom guidance were limited and that classroom guidance lessons would not be implemented until the second (spring) semester of the internship experience. Seven of the supervisors reported that their school counseling department was just beginning to gather data and establish data management systems and that they were not ready to fully include an intern in this specific domain of professional functioning. However, these same supervisors did note that if interns had a skill set in data management, they would welcome their input and assistance. The overall feedback from all of the supervisors was that there were too many items on the assessment, some items were not appropriate for the first semester (fall) intern evaluation, some items required clarification, and/or some of the school counseling departments' data management systems were in the development stage.

The assessment instrument and supervisor feedback was then shared with three colleagues (fellow counselor educators) to gather additional feedback on the appropriateness of the assessment items. Each of the three colleagues consulted had at least 15 years of supervision experience. Based on the feedback collected from the on-site supervisors and on the evaluation by the researchers and peer reviewers, this assessment instrument was not recommended for use. Using this sample, the modified measure did not effectively evaluate skill acquisition nor did it address the developmental process of the internship.

Phase 2

Procedure

The researchers used the feedback from the first phase, the current literature, and

CACREP, NCATE, and ASCA standards for school counselors and current practice to develop the CIDACS. The authors also consulted best practices in survey development and scale development literature to inform content and item development for the CIDACS (American Educational Research Association [AERA], American Psychological Association [APA], & National Council on Measurement in Education [NCME], 1999; Fowler, 2002). Item generation and scale development were essential aspects addressed in this study.

The CIDACS is a three-stage developmental assessment process focusing upon skill acquisition: initial acquisition, mid-point acquisition, and competency. The universities participating in this study provide two-semester internships; however, the CIDACS's three-stage assessment process is also applicable to one-semester internships. There are 19 items in Assessment #1; 24 items in Assessment #2; and 18 items in Assessment #3; a 4-point Likert-type rating scale is (0 = *unsatisfactory*; 1 = *basic*; 2 = *proficient*; and 3 = *distinguished*). During Phase 2's scale development process, discussion occurred regarding the appropriate Likert-type scale. Based on counselor educators' feedback, a 4-point Likert-type scale was used rather than the 6-point Likert-type scale of the modified ASCA sample counselor evaluation (used in Phase 1). The counselor educators noted that the *na* category could be eliminated because the developmentally appropriate items should negate the need for that category. They also reported that the "Fail" category should be dropped because the on-site supervisors do not "grade" interns, but provide feedback that is incorporated into the intern's course grade.

The authors asked their respective university school counseling programs to replace their previously used evaluation tool with the CIDACS. The faculty supervisors at both universities, as well as the program coordinators, agreed to use the CIDACS for intern evaluation. All site supervisors that partnered with both university settings were sent a letter, notifying them that they were receiving an evaluation tool that was new and exploratory in nature and asking for their feedback about the assessment tool. Site supervisors were notified that they could elect not to use this form if they chose and could opt to not participate in the use of this form at any time during the evaluation process.

Data Collection

Data collection took place at key points throughout the internship. Data collection occurred when each of the three assessment forms were submitted; data collection also occurred at the completion of the internship. The site supervisor completed the internship assessment form and provided feedback about the form's utility, readiness for use, and developmental appropriateness given the point at which the trainee was in the internship experience, followed by their overall feedback on the utility of this assessment process.

The school counseling program faculty supervisors of both university settings met with the on-site supervisors during their respective annual site supervisor meetings. The format of this meeting is a small group setting and facilitates communication between the faculty and site supervisors and provides an additional forum for sharing information about the internship assessment process. Site supervisors were given hard copies of the assessment instrument and reminded that it was newly developed. The supervisors were asked to provide feedback on the assessment instrument; all site supervisors from both university settings agreed to provide feedback.

Feedback was provided in two forms: written and verbal. The first data gathered were written feedback provided by answering three questions at the end of each of the three assessment forms. The three questions were: Are the skill areas measured by this assessment developmentally appropriate for the intern at this point in the internship? What additional areas, if any, would you recommend be assessed at this point in the internship? Was this assessment instrument easy to use? Following the completion of the internship, the site supervisors who completed the CIDACS were asked

for verbal feedback on the assessment process and the assessment instrument. Although supervisors had provided initial feedback during the actual rating of the instrument, such redundancy in data collection addresses the standard of trustworthiness known as dependability (Morrow, 2005). These data were gathered through phone contact and/or a face-to-face meeting with the site supervisor. Specifically, they were asked again for feedback about: the forms' utility, readiness for use, and developmental appropriateness given the point at which the trainee was in the internship experience.

Results

The CIDACS was a primary result of the process described above. The CIDACS was developed and refined throughout this study. The CIDACS is based on the standards set by CACREP, NCATE, and ASCA; measures the developmental progress of skill acquisition through the internship experience; and meets the established guidelines and standards for test development. Specifically, item and content development is based on the CACREP standards (CACREP, 2009), the NCATE domains/proficiencies (2009), the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2003), current literature, feedback from professionals in the field, and a review of currently used evaluation measures. The scale items were refined through a peer review process that utilized the expertise of counselor educators and site supervisors. Each evaluation targeted three areas of competency: professional behaviors, counseling skill development, and management system/accountability. The authors used a three-stage developmental format in order to ensure that appropriate knowledge and professional milestones were assessed at the appropriate stages of internship. Further, throughout the development of the CIDACS, the *Standards of Educational and Psychological Testing* (1999) were relied upon to inform best practice in assessment design.

Content analysis was utilized in this study. In this analytic method, "Analysis of what the text says deals with the content aspect and describes the visible, obvious components, referred to as the manifest content" (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003, p. 106). The data were sorted by content into themes, and a coding scheme based on frequency was established. Concurrent with the methodological rigor in the field of qualitative research, categories were derived from the data inductively. The following themes were identified: the critical need for developmental assessment, the implications of the multiple roles of the school counselor during internship, the call for a consistent comprehensive internship assessment instrument, and the need for Student Assistance Program (SAP) training in counselor education programs.

The first identified theme was the developmental nature of skill acquisition throughout the internship experience. All supervisors endorsed the items of each of the three assessment instruments as measuring developmentally appropriate skills. Examples of responses supporting this theme range from "the areas assessed are the key ones to date" to "I like grading the skills that the intern is doing. When there is a long list of skills that they haven't been exposed to yet, I wonder whether I am providing [the interns working with me] with what they should have by then." When asked for additional areas to be assessed at the first of three evaluation points in the internship, two of the supervisors identified the student's ability to take initiative as a possible area of assessment. Supervisor feedback later in the internship process and at the end of the internship indicated that the interns did take initiative, but not as early in the internship experience as the supervisor expected. These data from the supervisors indicated that skill acquisition was a central construct assessed by this measure.

A second theme was the need for a comprehensive evaluation system that assesses the multiple roles of the school counselor. The data exemplified that those professionals who train school counseling interns have an expectation that the intern will not only learn counseling skills but also become knowledgeable in areas such as special education law, rules and procedures, crisis management, administrative tasks

(e.g., scheduling) and postsecondary transitions, and community resources. The site supervisors indicated that the items of the CIDACS measured the many and varied requirements of the school counselor's role—from basic counseling skills to curriculum development to outcome based assessment. Data from one supervisor's response accurately represented the general consensus: "measuring all that is expected of a school counselor is important. We want to be able to hire new counselors that know what the job is and are ready to hit the ground running."

Internship is the culminating field experience in a counselor education program. It is the transition from theory to practice. With this transition comes the need for comprehensive evaluation. Hence, one area of query in this study was: What additional areas, if any, would you recommend be assessed at this point in the internship? Data from the site supervisors noted: "I feel this assessment adequately assesses the internship"; "I think this is a comprehensive evaluation"; "I feel that those assessed are very appropriate"; and "Did you go by the ASCA Model? I like it and the questions work." The CIDACS was developed based on the standards of the national accrediting organizations. The data indicated that 92.5% of the respondents endorsed the CIDACS as a comprehensive internship assessment instrument. The data support the use of a comprehensive, standards-driven assessment of internship and supports the initial investigation of the content validity of the CIDACS.

Data from the site supervisors also revealed a theme of SAP training and education. Although 92.5% of the respondents felt that the instrument was comprehensive, 7.5% of the respondents requested items on C-SAP training and Peer Mediation Training. Specifically, data from site supervisors' responses that exemplified this theme were "Additional area that would be a great asset are SAP training/Peer Mediation Training"; "Student Assistant Training (SAP) and Peer Mediation Training would be an asset"; "Counselors are usually part of the SAP Team—so SAP training would be helpful"; and "My intern is excellent—and it is really helpful that she has [had] SAP training". This emerging theme provides insight into the expectations in the field and informs counselor education curricula.

Discussion

PAR provides a model of inquiry founded in partnership with the participants and researchers working toward a common goal. This PAR study is based on a partnership between counselor educators and school counselors/site supervisors in the field. Partnerships develop over time and take commitment to the relationship. The counselor education programs involved with this study spent years valuing the relationships with and partnering with school counselors on multiple projects. The results of this study are an example of the productivity generated by these partnerships.

The results of this study indicate that the comprehensive developmental evaluation system, the CIDACS, addressed the required skills of each of the three developmental stages during the internship. The results of this study highlight the need for implementing a developmental approach to the assessment of skill acquisition that is consistent with the fundamental tenets of the counseling profession. Specifically, this study's data exemplify an important implication for building theory in the field of professional school counseling: the importance of development in the school counseling profession. This importance is evidenced by the supervisor feedback and by various macro level influences, as 44 states currently certify school counselors as PreK–12 or K–12 educational professionals (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2011). The accepted standard of these various educational institutions is that school counselors are uniquely qualified as developmental specialists. Hence, school counselors, by virtue of their training, place a high level of importance on the impact of an individual's context and developmental stage.

In addition to building theory in the field of professional school counseling, this study has implications for practice in professional school

counseling. Consistent with this fundamental approach to practice, professional school counselors in the field often take this developmental perspective into their role as an on-site supervisor and indicate support for a developmentally focused measure of skill acquisition. As such, the CIDACS measured the skills necessary to perform the varied roles and responsibilities of the school counselor. Further, the standards-based items of the CIDACS were viewed as appropriate and relevant to the current requirements of the profession. Building on this developmental approach, the data supported a comprehensive assessment consistent with professional standards.

When addressing the contribution of this study to the areas of research and scholarship in professional school counseling, it is important to examine the limitations of this study. One limitation of qualitative research is the threat of researcher bias (Patton, 2002). Although this issue could have been a factor in this study, the use of peer review, continual data analysis, and the first author's use of the second author and other colleagues as data auditors for cross-checking analysis and for debriefing were all used to minimize this threat. Another limitation of qualitative research is the use of a purposeful sample. The participants in this study were all school counselor site supervisors from the mid-Atlantic region of the United States; however, to minimize this threat, the school sites are varied in demographics. The study drew data from elementary and secondary schools in urban areas and elementary and secondary schools in rural areas, ensuring that the supervisors who completed this form had a variety of different responsibilities and roles within their schools' communities. Such diversity and purposeful sampling of site supervisors helped to more richly capture responses to the CIDACS, so that the assessment could more accurately describe the various functions and roles of the school counselor, which the CIDACS was designed to assess.

Despite these limitations, this study highlights areas in need of future research. Based on the results of this study, future research needs to be done using the CIDACS to analyze other constructs related to school counseling internship training. Specifically, site-specific training is a phenomenon in critical need of investigation. Future studies should further investigate the validity and reliability of this developmental internship assessment process. They should also focus on the importance of standards-based assessment instruments as "living" documents that remain current and relevant.

Appendix

CIDACS Evaluation 1
Counseling Internship Developmental Assessment of Counseling Skills

Professional School Counselor
School Counselor-in-Training Name _____ Date: _____
Evaluator Name: _____ Position: _____

***Directions*:**

1. For each of the performance areas, please use the following rating scale:

0—Unsatisfactory	1—Needs Improvement	2—Proficient	3—Above Average

2. Also, include any relevant comments addressing the intern's professional skill development

Description	Rating			
Professional Behaviors				
Adheres to agreed upon schedule	0	1	2	3
Arrives on time for internship	0	1	2	3
Dresses appropriately for internship	0	1	2	3
Demonstrates appropriate interpersonal relationships with colleagues and staff	0	1	2	3
Meets and effectively communicates with primary site supervisor (and secondary supervisors, if applicable), demonstrating an openness and willingness to learn	0	1	2	3
Demonstrates flexibility or adaptability	0	1	2	3
Takes initiative in seeking out additional advice, resources or supervision, when needed	0	1	2	3
Comments:				
Counseling Skill Development				
Effectively establishes rapport with students	0	1	2	3
Communicates to student the nature and boundaries of the counseling relationship	0	1	2	3
Demonstrates effective listening skills	0	1	2	3
Accurately reflects student's thoughts and feelings	0	1	2	3
Demonstrates an awareness and sensitivity to student's developmental stage and developmental context	0	1	2	3
Demonstrates an awareness and sensitivity to student's cultural and contextual/systemic reality	0	1	2	3
Identifies and assesses factors that are supporting or impeding student's academic, career, personal success	0	1	2	3
Identifies student's strengths and needs with contextual, cultural and developmental awareness	0	1	2	3
Comments:				
Management System/Accountability				
Demonstrates knowledge of school procedures and policies	0	1	2	3
Effectively identifies school resources and uses appropriately	0	1	2	3
Plans with knowledge and understanding of the school district's calendar	0	1	2	3
Identifies community resources that can be used to improve student achievement and success	0	1	2	3
Comments:				

CIDACS Evaluation 2
Counseling Internship Developmental Assessment of Counseling Skills

Professional School Counselor
School Counselor-in-Training Name _____ Date: _____
Evaluator Name: _____ Position: _____

Directions:
1. For each of the performance areas, please use the following rating scale:

0—Unsatisfactory	1—Needs Improvement	2—Proficient	3—Above Average

2. Also, include any relevant comments addressing the intern's professional skill development.

Description	Rating			
Professional Behaviors				
Able to make effective use of constructive feedback.	0	1	2	3
Accepts personal and professional responsibility and initiates action to resolve concerns.	0	1	2	3
Accurately self appraises counseling skills and performance.	0	1	2	3
Works with his/her supervisor in monitoring student's progress.	0	1	2	3
Consistently adheres to the ASCA ethics code.	0	1	2	3
Demonstrates ability to maintain confidentiality with students, teachers and colleagues.	0	1	2	3
Exercises patience with students while balancing and attending to the multiple tasks required of a school counselor.	0	1	2	3
Promotes equity and access for every student.	0	1	2	3
Demonstrates willingness to try new or different strategies with students.	0	1	2	3
Comments:				
Counseling Skill Development				
Counsels individual students and small groups of students with identified needs and concerns.	0	1	2	3
Demonstrates effective listening skills.	0	1	2	3
Accurately reflects student's thoughts and feelings.	0	1	2	3
Consults effectively with parents or guardians, teachers, administrators and other relevant individuals to improve student success.	0	1	2	3
Collaborates with parents or guardians, teachers and administrators to help students establish post-secondary goals and develop and use planning skills; implements strategies and actions as appropriate.	0	1	2	3

(continued)

Actively participates in school meetings (e.g., IEP, SAP, parent)	0	1	2	3
Conducts competent crisis assessment and intervention, including suicide risk management.	0	1	2	3
Implements an effective referral process with administrators, teachers, other school personnel and community resources.	0	1	2	3
Develops materials and instructional strategies based on relevant research.	0	1	2	3
Teaches school/classroom guidance units effectively and uses differentiated instruction strategies.	0	1	2	3
Comments:				
Management System/Accountability				
Tracks time spent providing direct and indirect service to students.	0	1	2	3
Completes paperwork as required by the site and/or school district.	0	1	2	3
Advocates with supervisor(s) for the role of the school counselor in the school and the guidance program in the school and within the broader context of the school district.	0	1	2	3
Collects and utilizes data to improve program development and student planning.	0	1	2	3
Develops measurable outcomes for school counseling programs, activities, interventions, and experiences.	0	1	2	3
Comments:				

CIDACS Evaluation 3
Counseling Internship Developmental Assessment of Counseling Skills

Professional School Counselor
School Counselor-in-Training Name _____ Date: _____
Evaluator Name: _____ Position: _____

Directions:
1. For each of the performance areas, please use the following rating scale:

0—Unsatisfactory	1—Needs Improvement	2—Proficient	3—Above Average

2. Also, include any relevant comments addressing the intern's professional skill development

Description	**Rating**			
Professional Behaviors				
Takes a leadership role within the counseling department.	0	1	2	3
Demonstrates self-confidence in the role of counselor.	0	1	2	3
Encourages staff involvement to ensure the implementation of the school guidance program.	0	1	2	3
Becomes an integral member of the school community.	0	1	2	3
Promotes equity and access for every student.	0	1	2	3
Consistently adheres to the ASCA ethics code.	0	1	2	3
Comments:				
Counseling Skill Development				
Selects appropriate assessment strategies to evaluate student's academic, career, and personal/social development and interprets assessment information in a valid and relevant manner.	0	1	2	3
Facilitates appropriate closure to counseling relationships.	0	1	2	3
Provides support for students who are transitioning to other sites, schools, etc.	0	1	2	3
Demonstrates sensitivity and comfort interacting with socioculturally diverse students and colleagues.	0	1	2	3
Effectively communicates the needs of the students for the upcoming school year.	0	1	2	3
Participates in designing, implementing, and evaluating prevention and intervention programs to meet the needs of the school (e.g. School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SPBS), workshops, parent education, programs using peer helping strategies, teacher training).	0	1	2	3
Consults with teachers, staff and community organizations to promote student success.	0	1	2	3
Implements student programs (e.g., peer helping, conflict resolution, time management, self-esteem).	0	1	2	3
Comments:				
Management System/Accountability				
Advocates for learning and academic experiences and opportunities to promote student development.	0	1	2	3
Advocates for school policies, programs, and services that enhance a positive, equitable and responsive school climate.	0	1	2	3
Uses data to improve program development and student planning.	0	1	2	3
Discusses the counseling department services management system and the program action plans with her/his supervisor and, if possible, the school administrator.	0	1	2	3
Comments:				

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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