Training in Supervision

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Clinical supervision has been a standard part of training for clinical practice for about a century. Since 2002 competence has been an ethical standard of the APA Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct. Even earlier versions of the Ethical Principles included competence as a principle to which psychologists were bound. Yet until the last couple of decades few graduate programs offered training in supervision. Thus the typical supervisor began the practice of clinical supervision with no training, and often with no supervised experience in providing supervision. This lack of training and experience prior to beginning to offer clinical supervision may be one of the factors that accounts for the documented reports of trainees in the role of supervision as difficult to distinguish.

NCSPP schools will be more likely to offer a supervision course as courses devoted to the course, and other program characteristics that may be discrepant.

We included programs listed in either source. Information about the programs was gathered in two ways. The first was to gather data from the 2011 edition of the Graduate Study in Psychology (APA, 2012) were not fully complete. The second was from web-sites are more or less inversely related to the difficulties experienced. For many, it became apparent that there were supervision courses.

Results

A total of accredited 362 graduate programs were identified. Usable data were obtained for 331 of these programs but data remains incomplete for most programs.

PsyD or PhD

An association was found between disciplines and degrees conferred. For counseling and school psychology programs 13.6% and 11.0% of degrees conferred were PsyD Degrees, while for clinical programs 42.4% of degrees were PsyD degrees. A Pearson’s Chi Square test found two degrees of freedom was highly significant (Chi Square = 17.17, p = .001). In a multivariate analysis of variance, comparisons based on degree conferred (PsyD vs PhD) discovered a significant effect for:

- Program length: F(1, 117) = 4.48, p = .037 with PsyD degree programs shorter than PhD programs (M = 5.13 vs 5.55 respectively).
- Number of students (F(1, 117) = 18.93, p = .001) with PsyD degree programs enrolling about an average of four times more students than PhD programs (M = 196.58 and 49.68 respectively).
- Cohort size (F(1, 117) = 100.01, with PsyD degree programs annually admitting about an average of six times more students than PhD programs (M = 45.00 and 8.42 respectively).
- Number of faculty employed by the program (F(1, 117) = 5.48, p = .028 with mean hours of 2.00 and 2.76 for PsyD and PhD programs respectively).
- Number of faculty did not differ (F(1, 117) = 3.26, p = .074, with PsyD and PhD means of 16.08 and 21.39 respectively).
- Significant differences were found among clinical, counseling, and school psychology doctoral programs for:

Supervision Courses by Degree Program and Year Offered in Curriculum


Selected References

Discussion

• Findings indicated little standardization in the information provided, and significantly less standardization in the ways in which information was organized on program web-sites.

• The listings of accredited programs in psychology (APA, 2011) and in Clinical Psychology (APA, 2012) were not fully consistent, possibly due to somewhat different publication dates. We included programs listed in either source.

• Attrition rates for NCSPP schools were identified, and usable data obtained for 331 programs. However, missing data was not a significant problem that limits conclusions for the present results.

• Program lengths were reported in terms of a range of years, median, and mean time to completion. This further complicated data analysis.

• Program length was significantly shorter in NCSPP schools than in other graduate programs.

• NCSPP programs averaged about six times as many admissions per year and also averaged about four times as many total students enrolled.

• The smaller discrepancy in total enrolled students than admissions suggested there may be higher attrition rates among NCSPP programs, although we did not examine data regarding this outcome.

• NCSPP schools also reported significantly fewer total faculty members.

• Clinical psychology programs were significantly more likely to confer the PsyD degree than counseling and school programs. APA may more vigorously encourage Clinical Psychology doctoral programs to confer the PsyD or Counseling and School Psychology programs can more commonly aspire for their graduates to seek professorial roles where the PhD may be preferred.

• Gathering data on supervision course offerings proved difficult to accomplish from web-sites postings.

• We found no association between offering supervision courses and either degree conferred or program identification.

• Some programs provided their courses in supervision in the first or second years of training, suggesting that they were more likely to focus on theory and research than on experiential practice in providing supervision to other trainees.

• Because of the difficulty in accessing information on supervision offerings we have little confidence in any conclusions based on these data.

• In some ways these findings bear more on program reporting and accessibility of information than on actual offerings of courses in clinical supervision. In short, we found the difficulty in determining from web-site information whether a supervision course was required by a given program to be daunting. We tentatively concluded that alternative methods will be needed to accomplish this goal.

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