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The Undergraduate Psychology Practicum Program: Best Practices in Practicum Supervision

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This study looked into the undergraduate psychology practicum program as experienced by teachers handling the subject. Twelve practicum teacher-supervisors from major universities across the Philippines were interviewed using a qualitative phenomenological approach. Resulting data included their views and feelings about practicum supervision and the challenges and opportunities found in their work. Best practices were found associated with the practicum subject itself, the practicum teacher, the academic institution, partner agencies, and relevant government agencies and professional organizations.

Keywords: Undergraduate psychology practicum program, practicum supervision, practicum teachers, phenomenological approach, supervisory experiences, best practices

INTRODUCTION

Supervision is an essential factor in the overall learning experience of students engaged in practicum work. The roles and responsibilities of those involved in the various stages of practicum are critical because students' understanding of the link between theory and practice hinges on the expertise and competence of supervisors. Supervision is crucial to developing and enhancing students' self-awareness, competence, and sense of professionalism.

Indeed, the role of supervision in preparing practitioners is so vital that there has been global recognition of its worth and significance (Openshaw, 2012). In fact, unlike a few decades ago when it was closely associated with other fields, clinical supervision is now a recognized field distinct from teaching, counseling, and consultation (Leddick & Bernard, 1980, cited in Ellis, 2010). Evidence of its value and importance are the local and national policies pertaining to professional requirements regulating its practice. Moreover, legal mandates are included in the code of ethics of various international and national professional organizations and regulatory bodies to ensure competent practice among supervisors.

Johnson and Stewart (2000), however, observed that, although supervision is considered as one of the major aspects of professional preparation, it falls short of the set standards. Likewise, as a hallmark of professional training and as an important element in work-study programs, Crespi and Lopez (1999) stated that not much has been written about supervision issues that particularly influence school-based psychology supervisors. Similarly, while literature is replete with studies focusing on the graduate and postgraduate levels (mostly foreign-initiated), only a few center on the undergraduate level where supervision begins.

With the full implementation of the Psychology Act of 2009 (Professional Regulation Commission, 2011), the law professionalizing the practice of psychology, it is vital that students be given the best possible practicum exposure—one that does not only train them to acquire necessary competence but also helps them develop appropriate professional work ethics.

Corollary to the strong focus on professionalization, it is imperative that, as students engage in practicum work, they receive optimum supervision and pertinent work experiences in various settings and learn to be competent and ethical professionals. However, except for the general guidelines specifically on the number of hours and prerequisite subjects provided by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), there seems to be a lack of standards relative to the specific guidelines among higher education institutions that explicitly outline the various aspects of practicum including supervision, qualifications, roles, and responsibilities; preplacement, placement, and postplacement activities; specific objectives and activities; and policies and requirements. This reality may potentially leave the practicum supervisor at a loss and the students at a disadvantage. Although some higher education institutions (HEIs) have formulated their own guidelines, there appears to be no consensus as to what constitutes the expected standards. Thus, there is a need to address issues and concerns relative to supervision of practicum students in the undergraduate level so that a more appropriate and relevant guide can be institutionalized and competent practice ensured.

In the context of undergraduate practicum, supervision consists of relationships or links among the academic supervisor, the supervisee, and the work setting, and these relationships constitute the complex totality of supervision. According to Hays and Clements (2011), together, the workplace supervisor, the academic supervisor, and the student form a learning triad. In Lamzon's (2015) study, the focus was on the practicum supervisor based in an academic institution.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

As specified in RA 10029, the practice of psychology includes psychological intervention, assessment, and programs of which clinical supervision is included. Clinical supervision is defined as "the direction, guidance, mentoring, and cliniquing of psychology practitioners and interns, psychometricians, and other trainees for psychology-related work to meet the standards of quality and excellence in professional practice." Powel and Brodsky (2004) defined clinical supervision as "a disciplined, tutorial process wherein principles are transformed into practical skills, with four overlapping foci: administrative, evaluative, clinical, and supportive." In this definition, administrative supervision stresses observance of organizational and procedural aspects of an agency; evaluation mechanisms are also employed to realize gains obtained from the experience.

It is clear that the supervisor has the expertise to supervise and that he/she intervenes to improve the supervisee's performance. Clinical supervision is anchored on a relationship characterized by respect and a clear understanding of one's expectations, role, and accountability. Haynes, Corey, and Moulton (2003) articulated that clinical supervision aims "to create a context in which the supervisee can acquire the experience needed to become an independent professional," adding that supervision is "artful,

but it's an emerging formal arrangement with specific expectations, roles, responsibilities, and skills." Clearly, the focus of clinical supervision is on honing one's effectiveness through affirmative changes in knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

Hays and Clements (2011) add that supervision is the guidance and support students need while on placement to ensure that the learning experience is optimized and that they have the overall most positive experience possible. Page and Wosket (cited in Hawkins & Shohet, 2007) stated that good supervision should allow for a two-way flow in which both supervisor and supervisee are responsive to each other's input. Supervision, therefore, becomes a dynamic learning and developmental process in which both parties learn and grow together.

As a complex transaction between supervisor and supervisee, supervisory models have been developed to provide a framework that serves as a guide for clinical supervisors (Smith, 2009). Bernard (1992, cited in Smith, 2009) said that models are important because they methodically address "a safe supervisory relationship, task directed structure, methods addressing a variety of learning styles, multiple supervisory roles, and communication on skills enhancing listening, analyzing, and elaboration," adding that one's personal model of supervision keeps on improving and changing as one profits from experience and forms insight.

Although there is a general consensus in the literature that a model of clinical supervision is extremely indispensable for quality supervision and one's practice should be anchored on it, Cochrane, Salyers, and Ding (2010) reported that supervisors generally do not have adequate knowledge about supervision models. Although almost half of the respondents surveyed claimed they had a framework for supervision processes, only very few were able to describe an evidence-based model when asked to explain. Nonetheless, they claimed they had the competence to supervise. Villar (2008) had noted that, among counselor practitioners, a number do not have a clear theoretical orientation in their practice, later citing the study of Sexto and colleagues showing that theoretical orientation is not a key element factor in counseling outcomes (Villar, 2012).

Falender and others (2004) proposed supervision as a core competency in psychology and presented a competencies framework composed of specific elements exemplifying knowledge, skills, values, and meta-knowledge. All competencies have to be emphasized to guarantee sufficient training and professional development. In addition to the core competencies, Falender et al. (2004) proposed the inclusion of supraordinate factors of supervision pervasive in all facets of professional development and that take into account the idea that professional development is a lifelong, cumulative process necessitating emphasis on diversity along with legal and ethical issues.

Ellis (2010) observed that, in the absence of frameworks and provisions of support that link theory and practice in university work-related programs, most academic supervisors are not disposed or fail to deliver what students need in the various phases or activities of practicum work. Ellis and colleagues (2013) confirmed in their study on the incidence of inadequate and harmful supervision that 93% of the supervisees assessed received inadequate supervision and 35.3% experienced harmful supervision. The authors clarified and emphasized that harmful supervision was different from, but part of, inadequate supervision.

Certainly, competence to provide supervision requires adequate and formal training (Harvey & Struzziero, 2008), but as Falender et al. (2004) noted, despite the fact that it is an important field of specialization among psychologists, formal training and standards have generally been underemphasized. The study conducted by Cochrane and colleagues (2010) confirmed that most intern supervisors lacked formal training in supervision and that they were not given appropriate orientation from their respective academic institutions for functioning as supervisors. Moreover, in a national survey conducted by Johnson and Stewart (2000) among Canadian psychologists who served as clinical supervisors in academic or service settings, about two-thirds of the respondents had no formal training in supervision and therefore felt inadequate to supervise. The studies of Mateo (2010) and Laud (2013) also pointed out that supervision practices are far from ideal.

Deal and Clements (2006, cited in Hays & Clements, 2011) reported that students supervised by trained field instructors were significantly more satisfied than those by untrained field instructors particularly in the following areas: supporting their work at the work settings, providing specific feedback about their performance, utilizing theoretical concepts when discussing cases or situations, and explaining the reasons why a particular intervention used by the supervisee was effective or not. Furthermore, Cochrane et al.

(2010) said that most interns are supervised by underqualified supervisors whose training does not include formal coursework in supervision. Similarly, Harvey and Struzziero (2008) and Bernard and Goodyear (2009) also stated that, without adequate knowledge and skills acquired through formal coursework and training, deciding which model to use in a particular supervisory relationship would be tough.

Supervision among practicum students in the undergraduate level comes from both the academic or placement supervisor who is school-based and the on-site supervisor who represents the host or partner institution. In this study, practicum supervisors or practicum teachers refer to supervisors who are based in the academic setting and who take charge of the placement of practicum students in different work settings. Coll and Eames (cited in Hays & Clements, 2011) affirm the pivotal role of placement supervisors in learning programs, stressing that the role of the academic supervisor is important in encouraging active involvement and in increasing satisfaction in practicum work. However, Smith (2010) has indicated that therapists or counselors are not necessarily good supervisors, stating that a "'master' clinician may not always be a 'master' supervisor without the addition of training and competency in supervisory knowledge and skills."

In providing supervision among practicum students and interns, supervisors employ a variety of strategies and tools. As revealed in the study of Cochrane et al. (2010), supervisors typically used case consultations, live supervision (direct observation), intern self-report, and model as modes in supervising interns. The least frequently used are role play, audio tapes, and video tapes. Of these methods, Bernard and Goodyear (2009) had earlier found intern self-report about the client and case least effective. Yet, many are still utilizing it.

Aside from observing the institution's directive on student safety and general welfare, Hays and Clements (2011) characterized what the supervisory relationship should be, where the supervisor fulfills various roles including teacher, counselor, mediator, consultant, and diplomat, and must often work with managers and human resources staff in host facilities to create effective learning environments for students. The academic supervisor is responsible for assessing student learning associated with the placement and may collaborate with the workplace supervisor to balance assessment of work performance and learning; he/she may also have to work together with

course conveners or other faculty members and workplace supervisors to ensure alignment between curriculum and workplace requirements.

Indeed, practicum in the undergraduate level closely resembles cooperative education which, according to Coll and Eames (2000), brings about three models for the role of placement coordinators including a simple administrative role, as part of a centralized unit of coordinators whose functions are still mainly administrative and another that consists of dual roles as placement coordinators and teaching faculty with their specialty areas. In a simple administrative role model, the supervisor's main function is to provide a list of prospective employers to students, and interaction with employers, students, and faculty is minimal. The second model involves a centralized cluster of coordinators who are separate from the faculty and have more contact with employers but are rarely specialists in the discipline. In the third model, coordinators are specialists in their discipline and have strong interaction with students, faculty, and employer. As such, they are knowledgeable about the trade of the employer. The third model appears to be the most common practice in the local context. Most practicum supervisors are specialists in their field and typically hold dual if not multiple positions. Aside from being full-time faculty, they are also assigned other roles.

Meantime, the professional standards of the various professional organizations of the helping professions dictate that psychologists should only provide services for which they have been trained; this includes supervision. Republic Act 10029 regulates psychology practice in the Philippines. Recognizing the importance of the role of psychologists in nation-building and development, the law ensures that practitioners meet the necessary qualifications and standards to provide excellent and globally competitive services. Essentially, the law was enacted to protect the safety and general welfare of service users. Under the term "other psychological intervention programs," clinical supervision is included, along with addiction rehabilitation and treatment programs, behavioral management and intervention programs in correctional facilities, psychological training programs, and mental health programs in disaster and emergency situations.

The CHED Memo No. 38 (s. 2010) specifically defines the standards and policies of undergraduate psychology programs to ensure that HEIs offering such programs adhere to the set standards. Specifically, the memorandum states that the undergraduate psychology programs "prepare students for

jobs that may involve training, testing, and research and professions such as medicine, law, and business management." As graduates, they may follow career tracks in the helping profession, education, business, and government organizations and civil society.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Unlike in quantitative studies where variables are predetermined and their relationships described through conceptual or theoretical frameworks, Lamzon's (2015) study made use of an analytical framework because of its qualitative phenomenological nature. As an emergent design, Creswell (2008) indicated that qualitative research explores the participants' realities. Exploring the views and experiences of practicum supervisors in practicum supervision sheds light on their understanding of what constitutes competent supervision, their practices and activities, and their challenges and opportunities. As Lester (1999) stated, phenomenological research "exposes taken-for-granted assumptions or challenges a comfortable status quo…prompting action or challenging complacency."

2015 Study of Undergraduate Psychology Practicum Program

In Lamzon's (2015) study of the undergraduate psychology practicum program, the main problem was: What are the views and experiences of practicum teachers in practicum supervision? The qualitative phenomenological research design was used to draw out the views and experiences of 12 HEI-based undergraduate psychology practicum teachers from different parts of the country. All 12 schools offered both undergraduate and graduate programs in psychology. The 12 schools were the following: Ateneo de Manila University, De La Salle University—Manila, Miriam College, St. Paul College, and University of the Philippines in Luzon; Negros Oriental State University, Silliman University, University of San Carlos, and University of San Jose Recoletos in Visayas; and Ateneo de Zamboanga, San Pedro College, and Xavier University in Mindanao.

A 17-item semi-structured interview guide was pilot-tested with three undergraduate teacher-supervisors. Only three of the 12 key informants (KIs) were interviewed in person; the majority responded via email and

SMS. Other sources of data included relevant documents (e.g., MOAs and practicum manuals or guides) provided by key informants.

Lamzon's (2015) study indicated that the 12 KIs had multiple roles and responsibilities on top of being a practicum teacher-supervisor. Except for one who was a full-time teacher, they all held more than one designation: six were psychology program heads, four were full-time faculty members, one was a department vice chair, and another was director of a service learning institute. The number of years of experience supervising undergraduate psychology practicum students ranged from two to 15 years, with six to 90 students or one to two classes each term or semester. Four had doctorate degrees (three in psychology; one in Philippine studies); seven were master's degree holders (all in psychology with two exceptions—one in guidance and counseling, the other in industrial counseling). Four were licensed psychologists, one was a registered guidance counselor, two were licensed teachers, and the rest did not have a license. None had received formal training in practicum supervision.

Taking this diverse background into account, varying experiences were expected. Some had well-established structures as shown in the contents of their practicum guide/manual and in the way they described the policies and their duties and responsibilities. Others did not follow written procedures but relied on mechanisms that had worked well in the past. There were also differences in the schedule when the subject was offered, the number of settings, and the number of hours to be completed. Typically, except for two schools that chose to offer practicum in the summer, the subject was offered within a regular term, and students were sent to more than one setting (range = one to four settings) [e.g., community, government, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), industrial, and clinical settings]. Site supervisors also evaluated/graded the students. In addition, some practicum teachers considered self- and peer-ratings as important components in the overall ratings.

Preparing all stakeholders. All psychology practicum teacher-supervisors agreed that all stakeholders (i.e., practicum students or interns, practicum teacher-supervisor, and site supervisor) have to be sufficiently prepared to take on their particular roles. There should be a "fit" between the student and the site because, for instance, "not all students have the personality for clinical placements (e.g., level of maturity, some personal

issues that may be activated in the clinical setting).” The site as well must be selected for optimal experience. One teacher-supervisor referred to practicum as a “socialization process”—allowing students to be familiar with the agency they serve in the same way that the agency also gets acquainted with the students’ personality, skills, and abilities. This gives both parties the opportunity to consider prospective employment.

Teaching the Practicum Subject. As stated in CHED Memo No. 38 (s. 2010), practicum is an elective. As such, it is treated just like any other subject. Practicum and other psychology major subjects similarly require regular meetings, imparting knowledge, monitoring of student’s progress, giving of grades, and looking into student welfare. However, teaching practicum inevitably involves supervision; the teacher is required to do close monitoring, follow-up, personalized consultation, and dialogue with site supervisors. Generally, the main difference can be summed up into theory and practice or application. In addition, a difference lies in the inherent administrative work that practicum supervision demands. Both differ in requirements, and there are multiple sources of the student’s grades. In contrast to teaching other majors, practicum involves administrative work and interaction with people in the industry. Grading is done at the end of the term, and grades do not just come from the teacher—the onsite supervisor also contributes to the final grade. Finally, because students spend more time in the field than in the classroom, so does the teacher.

Establishing a Rationale for Undergraduate Practicum. Despite practicum being an elective and therefore optional, practicum teacher-supervisors still find it generally relevant as it enables students to see the connection between classroom experience and real-life scenarios. One teacher, in particular, considered practicum as a superior teaching strategy because students are engaged in real life situations under the supervision of a professional. Moreover, it helps students in knowing further their field of interest and in deciding which field to pursue after graduation. Two examples are provided:

> “Many students do not have firm plans after graduation when they choose the practicum site. In fact, it is through the practicum experience that they realize whether or not they are cut out for (1) clinical work, (2) HR work, or (3) both. For example, some students

claim that HR work is “boring”, so they explore teaching or clinical work. Those who enjoyed working with children proceed to SPED or a career in education after graduation. Those who enjoyed HR work take a master’s degree in HR soon after graduation. Those who enjoyed working in the psychiatric ward proceed to a medical degree…”

> “For a career track dimension of the licensure exam, the practicum/internship program is essential because it gives premium to the experiences and acquired knowledge of the students. Practicum will coordinate the balance between the theory-classroom-based types of education and the experiential-type-based education.”

Essentially, the practicum experience prepares individuals to become responsible professionals. It is not only a venue for value formation, but it serves as a feedback mechanism on how best the subject should be taught and information on the status of psychology in the field. Said one practicum teacher, “It’s really win–win…I know they learn something; they also provide services that maybe I will not be able to do because I have so many things on my plate. So I really appreciate it.”

Preparing Practicum Teachers in Supervision. Generally, the practicum teachers did not have any formal training. They learned the craft of practicum supervision while experiencing it such that, over the years, they became more and more familiar with the tasks and responsibilities of being a practicum teacher-supervisor. They were all academically oriented, i.e., inclined to teaching within the classroom. The practicum subject is considered a teaching load but a more demanding one. Their other (administrative) experiences somehow helped them in their role as practicum supervisors. For instance,

> “There was no special preparation save for basic supervisory and coordinating training in my previous roles as school administrator (Asst. Principal when I was in the High School, and Planning Officer when I was in General Administration, and as chair). It also helped that I have personally engaged in counseling, training, program development, human resources tasks, and field research as a professional these past 39 years.”(KI3)

Other mechanisms that proved helpful included reviewing pertinent documents relative to practicum (e.g., syllabi) and school policies and attending CHED's orientation and related seminars and fora. One teacher said that being a teacher and psychologist is in themselves already a form of preparation because the two roles are inseparable in practicum supervision. Learning from a predecessor was another form of preparing one's self for the role. Confidence developed from term to term and from year to year: "I did not receive any training related to it, so in essence, every year, it is a learning process…a trial and error every single time. Each year, I encounter new problems and challenges, so I make sure that adequate measures are taken not to repeat that problem on the next round of OJT/interns."

Time management is key. One practicum teacher said, "One has to have good time management because the visit has to be done in between my usual duties. The orientation for the students has to be done early so that rules will be followed." But presence of mind was a factor as well.

Institutional/Administrative Support. Administrative support covered moral and technical support particularly from direct superiors and colleagues in their respective departments. It also included minor privileges afforded by the school. Financial support included provision for transportation and other incidental expenses. For example, "The department offers the program as part of its institutionalized courses and thus provides the logistics for running the course, e.g., liaison with companies, and reproduction of materials." Another unique form of administrative support is a privilege in terms of ease in going in and out of the campus even during office hours. Monitoring students on site requires visits, and practicum teachers naturally have to leave the campus. Still, some schools apparently do not have clear structures supporting the practicum program because they tend to leave the responsibility of running the program to the practicum teacher alone.

Partnerships and Collaboration. With the exception of one who had limited interaction with host institutions, the majority were in harmony in saying that it has been mutually beneficial in spite of some problems and difficulties encountered along the way. The partnership with host institutions/agencies was generally referred to as a "give-and-take relationship." It also helped a lot when both parties, the academe and the host or partner institutions, have established and maintained very good relationship with each other for quite a time and are familiar with each other's roles and responsibilities. With established partnerships, each party is supportive, and giving feedback is easy. It was the most advantageous when host institutions had their alumni among their personnel.

Keeping up with the Standards. Although there is already a general directive in terms of how the practicum subject is to be treated, practicum teachers use different strategies. These practices are seen as attempts to establish standards in actualizing the objectives of the subject and include how the practicum subject is treated, the number of settings and hours to be completed, the number of students per site, practicum schedules and fees, and considerations in site selection. As per CHED Memo No. 38 (s. 2010), practicum is an elective and is given a three-unit teaching load. However, based on the interviews, two schools offered it twice in a school year, as Practicum 1 (first semester) and Practicum 2 (second semester), each with a three-unit credit.

Similarly, Section 11 of the memo specifies that practicum is an elective that should be taken after Psychological Assessment and preferably in the summer of third year. However, while Psychological Assessment and other subjects that are prerequisites to Psychological Assessment serve as prerequisites to Practicum, schools have different practices in terms of prerequisite subjects. They also vary with regard to the schedule as to when it is offered—i.e., summer or during a regular semester. Some said that Practicum could be taken once all the other major subjects have been taken. For other schools however, there are specific major subjects that serve as prerequisites. The student's year level standing is also considered.

In terms of the number of settings and hours to be completed, practicum teacher-supervisors have different practices. Normally, they send students to more than one setting, and the number of settings varies from one to four—including community, government, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), industrial, and clinical settings. There are situations when the number of hours is adjusted or increased based on the recommendation of site supervisors who believe that more hours is needed to help students become more focused on their assigned tasks. As one teacher narrated, "Company representatives and stakeholders who, during the practicum forum, said that our old scheme of 300 hours divided into three fields, create an atmosphere of 'hurrying up' among interns so it seemed as if interns wanted to get their 100 hours per field over and done with so that they would not lose time applying

for another field. Because of this, they focused less on the tasks at hand and on enjoying learning how things are done in the real working world." Apparently, most schools add more hours to what is stipulated in the CHED mandate which is only 150 hours. The reasons included the following: a) giving students more time for exposure and b) time for seminars other than onsite hours. There are also schools that, with the teacher's guidance, allow students to decide on how to structure their schedule in each practicum site based on their subject loading. Such strategy allows them to experience what it is like to be making decisions on their own.

Placement Practices. One challenge in placing students in the various sites is the number of students per site. Some schools limit the number of students they place in each site, but others do not have any fixed number. One school adopted a 'buddy' system for safety and security reasons. Likewise, there are sites that are free to determine the number of students they can accommodate and supervise. According to one teacher, "We do not have a limit in terms of the maximum number of interns for each setting. Usually, most of our students go into IO or social psych. Only a handful go into counseling or clinical." Some sites charge a certain amount as practicum or affiliation fees. Typically, however, only the clinical site and those in which students are exposed to testing charge such fees. While some teachers and students find the fees reasonable, others view such as exorbitant. At times the fees are what deter students from choosing sites.

With respect to selecting practicum sites, the primary consideration is that it should be a legal entity. Other than that, practicum teachers vary in their practice in terms of choosing the sites. Some have a specific set of criteria for the site and the onsite supervisor while others' main requirement is that there is a site supervisor, preferably with a background in psychology, who is willing to supervise the students. It is also expected that the site is able to provide the kind of exposure that the students need. The site's track record is likewise considered. Site assessment is typically done by the practicum teacher even in instances when possible sites would ask for practicum students. As such, practicum teachers really take time to assess prospective sites particularly with regard to its capability to provide meaningful practicum exposure to students. "Linkages made by the department are placed in the directory, and MOA has to exist." Instead of setting qualifications or criteria for site supervisors, one school gives much importance to goal-setting; regardless of who supervises

the students in the field, regardless of the supervisor's qualifications, students must accomplish their goals and that is what matters the most.

Conversely, if there are unfavorable comments about a particular site, generally, students are just allowed to finish their practicum hours if the situation is still tolerable. In extreme situations, students are withdrawn from the site. Sites that do not live up to the institutions' expectations or those who break the provisions stipulated in the memorandum of agreement/ understanding (MOA/MOU) are usually blacklisted in the roster of practicum sites.

At some schools, students are given the leeway to look for possible sites they think will give them the most relevant practicum exposure. Thus, they can suggest preferred sites, but the final approval still rests with the practicum supervisor because minimum site requirements also have to be taken into account. The specific track of students is also a consideration. For instance, one school discouraged students from spending their practicum in settings irrelevant to their career path. One teacher even discouraged students from having their exposure in the clinical setting, saying "we are not preparing them for that… It's a graduate level exposure… If they do go to a psychiatric ward, the work that I would expect them to do is mere group dynamics… and the one handling their program is not a psychologist but occupational therapists." In addition, the CHED memo does not allow practicum outside the country.

Interns are usually endorsed to companies where the university has existing MOAs. Companies will still have the discretion on intern selection processes. The school is strictly following the guidelines of CHED in sending interns to different settings, so basically, they are only exposed to institutions where they can optimize their learning and future profession. The students prepare an application letter, resume, and copy of grades. The department provides the MOU and endorsement letter; students personally proceed to their chosen sites to apply. The process is similar to an employee applying for a job.

There are also academic institutions that make use of the different offices within the campus as venue for practicum. Site proximity to the student's home is also considered. The practicum supervisor's familiarity with the site's preferences makes it easier for him/her to choose practicum students who match the site's criteria.

Practicum Guide. Perhaps what helped in the implementation of the practicum program is that many of the teachers had a practicum manual; for the minority that did not have a manual, the course syllabus served as their guide. Others based their practice on what had been passed on to them. However, they continuously improved their practice as necessary by conducting evaluation usually done as a team. Other pertinent documents were the MOA or MOU. The practicum guide/manual, in particular, stipulates the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved. It also contains policies on attendance, tardiness, requirements, grade computation, various forms, and communication templates. Proper behavior/decorum and the corresponding sanctions on inappropriate behaviors are also stipulated. Compared with the practicum manual/guide, the MOA is limited in its scope as it is more focused on the responsibilities of the three parties (academic institution and partner institution representatives and the practicum student).

Problems Encountered and Strategies Employed in Addressing Them. In the course of implementing the practicum program, despite all their best efforts, practicum teachers commonly encounter problems. These problems do not just happen during the actual practicum engagement but may also arise before or after the practicum engagement. They typically emanate from the practicum students, the practicum sites, the practicum site supervisors, and the HEI structure or system. Student factors included behavior and attitude (e.g., boredom tardiness, sleeping during work hours, lack of sense of responsibility, dropping out without official communication). Some site supervisors have refused to sign the MOA; others assign irrelevant or inappropriate tasks, demand more duty hours, have unrealistic expectations, or are unavailable during visits. Some problems have involved ethical issues, including sexual harassment. Normally, when the problems relate to situations where there are clear guidelines provided for in the MOA, addressing the issue is more easily done. Dos and don'ts are usually stipulated in the MOU (e.g., no duty beyond 5 PM; interns should not be given personal errands). Fortunately, in cases where students do not receive the kind of experience that they are supposed to gain, they are given the choice to change or transfer to another site.

In Lamzon's (2015) study, all sexual harassment complaints occurred in the industrial setting, but these incidents did not get to the attention of the practicum teacher directly but via their classmates (i.e., cointerns). However, as they also indicated, they no longer go through the long process of resolving

the case with the site. For them, the most logical action to take is to sever the partnership with the site by not placing practicum students there in the next term, especially if the alleged perpetrator is still connected with the site. Although some of them have specific guidelines on how to go about resolving issues such as sexual harassment, they would just pull out the student and give her/him options to transfer to another site. The alleged victim of sexual harassment is given appropriate assistance in the form of counseling. With this kind of situation, students somewhat lack the necessary protection from different forms of abuse that they may not even be aware of. On the other hand, there are practicum teachers who have not yet experienced dealing with any major complaints, e.g., situations likely to lead to a severance of ties with partner agencies. Nonetheless, they have created certain procedures in case there are complaints—either from the students or from the site supervisors— and likewise devised means for preventing or mitigating problems.

Additionally, some of the problems experienced by practicum teachers resulted from the school system itself over which they apparently do not have much control, including provisions for site visits and practicum subject schedule. Site visit is among the main and most difficult tasks of practicum teachers and along with it is the need for transportation provisions. In many cases, the practicum teacher has to shoulder the expense. Nonetheless, they still conduct site visits because they know that open communication among stakeholders about any issue is what maintains and cements the partnership between the practicum teacher, representing the academic institution, and the site supervisor, the partner agency/institution representative.

Challenges Confronting Practicum Teachers. In Lamzon's (2015) study, challenges are still classified as problems. However, these are more than just the usual problems because these could not simply be resolved by practicum teachers alone but require collaborative efforts of all parties. The long-term solutions are likely to pave the way for a better implementation of the practicum program that is expected to benefit all stakeholders. Some of these challenges are related to the problems cited earlier. However, they become challenges because, as mentioned, they are not easy to deal with.

Based on the practicum teachers' responses, these were found challenging: 1) practicum as teaching load (tasks include checking journals/outputs, site visits, consultations, attending to student concerns); 2) site-related issues (delayed completion of documents, conflicting rules between the parties,

rejection of student application, increasing number of students, cancellation of approved practicum schedule, lack of clear practicum program on site); and 3) practicum as summer offering. Stakeholders experience difficulties at various stages of the practicum engagement. These difficulties are even more challenging when the practicum subject is offered during the summer term. Taking into account the preparation required—preparing documents, contacting partner agencies, arranging schedules for the different settings, conducting orientation activities, and so on—summertime is insufficient for students to accumulate the required number of hours and, as a result, the greater the likelihood that students are not readily accepted by prospective agencies.

Opportunities for the Enhancement of Psychology Practicum. Despite various challenges and concerns, a number of opportunities have been articulated to improve supervision practices that would impact the teaching of the practicum subject in particular and the practice of the psychology profession in general. These opportunities hope to provide inputs in standardizing the implementation of the practicum program in the psychology undergraduate level. Likewise, these will serve as basis in improving not only the practicum program of other undergraduate courses but also the psychology graduate program. The opportunities or possibilities offered by the practicum teachers to improve practicum supervision include the need: for practicum to be treated not just as subject, for practicum teachers to be supported, to educate and keep stakeholders updated, and to collaborate with other stakeholders and the possibility of integrating practicum into relevant existing programs of the school.

Realizing that practicum is the summit of the students' experience in tertiary education, it should be packaged in a way that students will excitedly anticipate graduation. "Make it something that the student will look forward to…the culmination of their learning." Some of the teachers indicated that practicum should be a required subject, not just an elective, so that all students get the opportunity to be exposed to the different fields of psychology. But it is for the reason that practicum is different from other majors that it should be supported. Teachers feel that they deserve to be provided with the necessary support that comes with continuing education and training, updating/exposure, time, financial resources, and an easing of their work load. Suggestions included a) collaborative work with coteachers

so that the work load is distributed, b) having field supervisors in addition to onsite supervisors, and c) having a department practicum coordinator. With improved ratio between teacher and students and with adequate training and continuous updating, practicum teachers are better able to perform their duties and responsibilities particularly in molding students to become professionals. Because psychology is basically a research-filled discipline, teachers can inspire students to become scientists and thereby help expand knowledge about the field through research. Their own observations and experiences in the field can be a rich source for research.

Recognizing that much has yet to be done to improve practicum supervision practices that eventually lead to a more enhanced implementation of the practicum program, practicum teachers acknowledge the fact that a collective effort among stakeholders is necessary as each has a role to play to ensure that such improvements are achieved. For instance, on the part of HEIs, the practicum teachers feel the need for them to identify possible practicum sites including those outside the city/town where the HEI is located, establish partnerships with them, and increase the number of partner institutions for each setting. Strengthening collaboration is also important to ensure that students really benefit from the practicum experience. There is a need to identify more institutions willing to accept interns during the summer. As part of the collaborative relationship, the practicum teachers also observed the need for partner institutions to have site supervisors who really know how to supervise; they also need to be professionally updated. Likewise, teachers articulated specific suggestions for professional organizations, particularly the Psychological Association of the Philippines (PAP) of which practicum teachers are members, to consider a) accreditation mechanism for practicum programs and practicum sites, and b) lobbying for practicum as required subject.

In light of RA 10029, the practicum teachers recognized the need to educate partner institutions about legal mandates including PRC and CHED memoranda and guidelines to ensure smooth collaboration among stakeholders. Among other things, undergraduate psychology students should be prepared to take the licensure examination for psychometricians. However, because of the broadness of the psychology field, the practicum experience may not necessarily provide them the needed exposure solely for psychometric work.

To address such concern, service learning is integrated into the practicum subject or vice-versa. Three of the practicum teachers indicated a practicum–service integration strategy. "It's not really internship…it's a continuum of community engagements…the aim is really to help the people in the community." Further, "unlike in practicum or internship in which only the practicum students benefit as a result of their exposure in the practicum sites, in service learning, both parties benefit from the partnership; the students learn from rendering relevant service to the partner institution/agency and the latter also receives the much-needed service."

To summarize Lamzon's (2015) findings, the practicum subject, as shared by practicum teacher-supervisors, has no uniform system particularly in terms of when the subject is to be offered (summer or regular term), how the subject is treated (whether required or optional), the number of units assigned to the subject (three or six units), the number of practicum subjects to be taken, the number of site exposures, the number of hours to be completed, the schedule of practicum duty, and the manner of evaluating the readiness of the students as well as the ways by which their practicum performance is evaluated. Similarly, the teachers observed different practices in the various phases of the practicum period and had diverse guidelines on how the practicum should be run. Some had well-defined practicum manuals while others did not have written documents to guide them. Seemingly, their practices evolved as they gained experience supervising students and networking with partner institutions from year to year.

Moreover, on top of the teaching load remuneration, a few received honorarium for handling the practicum subject while most of them received the equivalent teaching compensation. In addition, some schools do not have clear structures supportive of the practicum program, and in many cases, except for the support of their colleagues and immediate head in the department, practicum teachers are left on their own in running the program. Neither do they have training exposure in practicum supervision. Nevertheless, despite work they described as exhausting and fulfilling, they were still able to deliver what was expected of them.

DISCUSSION

According to Bandura (2006, cited in Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009), individuals can have some control over their actions because they are basically "self-organizing, proactive, self-regulating, and self-reflecting." Despite the practicum teachers' less-than-ideal situation, their self-efficacy impacts their teaching behavior as well as the way they handle practicum supervision such that they are able to carry out their duties and responsibilities successfully. Moreover, their belief in their competence in running the practicum program in spite of the lack of adequate administrative/financial support and the attendant problems of supervision and networking with partner institutions make them transcend these difficulties. The teachers' views support the idea of Chaminuka and Kaputa (2014) that practicum promotes individual development as it affects the way they look at things, their beliefs and values which in the process, enrich their skills. Poole (2004, cited in Chaminuka & Kaputa, 2014) specified that among the advantages students obtained from practicum was the opportunity to gain additional knowledge, understanding, and experience as they put into practice theories and intervention strategies learned. At the same time, they are better equipped with knowledge and learn to appreciate various issues (e.g., ethical and legal issues) pertinent to the profession.

Bold and Chenoweth (2008) stated that practicum links theory, research, and practice; all of which are typically learned in distinct and separate ways. Students' experiences in practicum settings reinforce the socioconstructivism learning theory espoused by Vygotsky (Most influential learning theories, n.d.); the practicum experience adequately suits the assertion that learning takes place as students participate and engage in "social negotiation."

The practicum teachers also viewed practicum as a culmination of the students' academic preparation, giving their educators a sense of personal fulfillment and a sense of payback for all their efforts. This view supports the idea of Dehn and colleagues (cited in Edwards & Kananack, 2005) when they said that the sense of "giving back," of sharing one's time, ideas, learning, and thoughts, gives one a feeling of satisfaction. While giving back is both personally and professionally fulfilling, the supervisor, in the process of supervising, is at the same time improving his/her knowledge

and familiarity of theories, concepts, and practices in the field. Parks (n.d.) has said that supervision is probably the loftiest vocation in the helping professions because what goes with it is the "passing on the knowledge and skill, mentoring, monitoring, overseeing and evaluating" paramount to the continuance of the profession. The supervisor–supervisee partnership provides the foundation upon which the various professions are perpetuated through next generations.

Mateo (2010) had found graduate level practicum supervisors "accommodating and approachable" despite being "busy and overburdened." Edwards and Kananack (2005) also affirmed that school psychologists mentoring graduate practicum students go through a range of emotions, from exceedingly delightful to startlingly challenging and frustrating—feelings brought about by various situations encountered on site. Despite anticipating problems, practicum supervisors are still confronted with unexpected situations.

As Lamzon's (2015) study showed, practicum teachers did not have formal preparations or training in supervision; much of their knowledge about supervision was either passed on to them by former practicum teachers or a result of their own experience in the field. However, Bernard and Goodyear (cited in Cochrane, Salyers, and Ding, 2010) stressed that supervision "not only requires preparation but also is an ethical imperative." This emphasis on adherence to what is ethical particularly in the supervisory process was greatly advocated by practicum supervisors of master's level counseling programs in Jamaica (Stupart, Rehfuss, & Parks-Savage, 2010). In particular, this latter study indicated that, although supervisors still pointed out a need for more supervision training, they had received some forms of training in this area from professional seminars and workshops (60%), academic coursework (23%), graduate degree in supervision (8%), and in-service workshop (8%). Their findings also indicated that less than half of the respondents (47%) were members of professional health organizations. And the major method of supervision employed was case consultation with groups of students.

In the local front, the studies of Mateo (2010) and Laud (2013) indicated that supervision practices in the country are a far cry from what is ideal because of a lack of supervision training as well as institutions offering courses in supervision. Nonetheless, in this study, because supervision is part of the practicum as a teaching load given to practicum teachers who were apparently

thrust unprepared for the task of supervision, they tried to do the best they could even if at times they received limited technical and financial support from their respective academic institutions. With the feedback they received from students and partner institutions, the practicum exposure, with their guidance and supervision, was still able to accomplish the purpose for which it was intended. This perception validates the report of Hatcher, Wise, Grus, Mangione, and Emmons (2012) showing that, by and large, practicum sites conveyed adequate means for carrying out training. In Nippak's (2012) study, students' attitude, professionalism, work ethic, and overall work performance impressed site supervisors who recognized that practicum students demonstrated an impact on the institutions' management decisions. Practicum students' influence can perhaps be a force in forging stronger partnership among stakeholders, particularly between the school and partner agencies. The partnership between school supervisors or practicum teachers and the site supervisors is believed to bring about favorable alliance between the school and the site and is expected to present opportunities that will further reinforce the partnership (Al-Mekhlafi & Naji, 2013). However, Ellis (2010) contended that, because of the lack of frameworks and support provisions that connect theory and practice in academic institutions' work-related programs, most practicum supervisors are not prepared and they unsuccessfully carry out what students need while on practicum. In fact, in their study on the incidence of inadequate and harmful supervision, Ellis and colleagues (2013) stated that 93% of the supervisees evaluated conveyed inadequate supervision experience and another 35.3% received harmful supervision. The authors explained that harmful supervision is part of, though different from inadequate supervision.

Indeed, as Harvey and Struzziero (2008) pointed out, competence in supervision calls for adequate and formal training, adding that the lack of training in supervision is not in harmony with what is required in other fields of psychology such as counseling psychology and clinical psychology that have clear standards with regard to training, certification, and licensure. The situation portrays the discrepancy between what professional organizations advocate and what is actually experienced by stakeholders in the delivery of supervision. In a research examining 20 supervisor trainees meant to assess contemporary thinking about psychotherapy supervisor training and to look into current research investigating supervisor training/education and supervision, Watkins (2012) concluded that 1) the clinical validity of supervisor education appears

to be strong, solid, and sound; 2) although research suggests that supervisor training can have value in stimulating the development of supervisor trainees and better preparing them for the supervisory role, any such empirical support or validity should be regarded as tentative at best; and 3) the most formidable challenge for psychotherapy supervisor education may well be correcting the imbalance that currently exists between clinical and empirical validity and "raising the bar" on the rigor, relevance, and replicability of future supervisor training research. Smith (2009) highlighted that training and competency in supervision is extremely important because a "'master' clinician may not always be a 'master' supervisor." But then, in spite of the cognizance that supervision is a core competency in psychology and that it is definitely a significant field of specialization among psychologists, Falender and colleagues (2004) observed that standards in supervision that include formal training have generally been underplayed.

With regard to the various responsibilities of practicum teachers in the implementation of the practicum program, Coll and Eames (cited in Hays & Clements, 2011) asserted that the role of motivating students to be actively engaged in practicum work is vital, emphasizing that, with the proper guidance and direction of a competent supervisor, students will be able to profit much from the practicum experience. As indicated in the responses of practicum teachers in Lamzon's (2015) study, a practicum manual, syllabus, or related document served as their guide in the implementation of the practicum program. At Portland State University (PSU, n.d.), a practicum resource book is made available to students. To qualify for practicum, students must be at the junior level and must have taken major subjects related to the practicum setting. Specific learning objectives take into account the student's interest and the setting. Basically, the practicum program aims to 1) apply psychological principles to real-world human problems, 2) gain exposure to potential career paths, and 3) gain an understanding of ethical and social dimensions that arise in social service organizations. The students are not expected to develop professional skills during the course of the practicum, but learning objectives include the development of skills such as interviewing, group facilitation, and introductory assessment skills (PSU, n.d.).

The findings of Lamzon's (2015) study also indicated that, although the practicum teacher primarily takes care of looking for, assessing, and eventually selecting practicum sites, students can also recommend prospective sites subject to the approval of their teacher. Likewise, the student's interest is taken into consideration in the site selection. This practice is similarly observed in PSU where students work closely with the faculty advisor and thoroughly consider their career goals. Once the area of interest is identified, the student is expected to meet with the teacher to confer about possible practicum sites that can provide learning experiences that would allow the student to apply psychological theories and principles or research to social concerns. After choosing the site, the student makes a formal agreement with the site supervisor and the faculty sponsor. The faculty sponsor should be knowledgeable about the selected field setting, meaning it has to be aligned with the faculty's subspecialty in psychology. The faculty advisor prepares pertinent forms and documents including the contract (PSU, n.d.).

In their study on the supervisory practices of supervising teachers, Al-Mekhlafi and Naji (2013) disclosed that student interns believed that their supervising teachers fulfilled their role in the course of the practicum period and that the supervising teacher's personal attributes were ranked number one among the five subscales on supervisory practices and behaviors. Among the five subscales, modeling was ranked lowest. In contrast, the supervising teachers felt that they fulfilled their role primarily through modeling and secondly by their personal attributes.

In a study by Bucky and colleagues (2010) intended to identify the strengths and weaknesses in supervisor characteristics influential to the supervisee's clinical training experience and professional development, doctoral psychology student–supervisee respondents indicated that they consider the following characteristics as strengths possessed by their supervisors: above-average intelligence, a healthy attitude toward themselves, ethical integrity, and effective listening skills. Additionally, they see areas that need to be enhanced, namely, awareness of counter transference in supervision, the ability to stay focused, the ability to meet time constraints, commitment to the supervisory alliance, and an ability to challenge the supervisee effectively. Overall, majority of participants (68%) considered their supervisor as outstanding, very few (5%) rated their supervisor as acceptable, and 12% perceived their supervisors as poor (Bucky, Marques, Alley, & Karp, 2010).

Drawing from their experiences as practicum teachers, their role can be described as what Coll and Eames (2000) referred to as a model in cooperative education in which coordinators (practicum teachers, in this case) hold dual

roles as placement coordinator and teaching faculty. Wilson (cited in Coll & Eames, 2000) explained that, with these dual or even multiple roles, they are educators whose specialization is the provision of meaningful learning experiences in the form of work situations and the assisting of students to relate these experiences to their educational goals. In addition, Mosbacker (cited in Coll & Eames, 2000) pointed out that, aside from their tasks in the placement phase—in establishing/maintaining linkages with host agencies, in providing link among various stakeholders, and in promoting the status of cooperative education—the role also involves career guidance for students, the enrichment and monitoring of learning, and administering assessment. With reference to the provisions of the American Psychological Association (APA), Mateo (2010) asserted that supervisors have the major responsibility to oversee the services provided by trainees and to protect their welfare by conducting regular meetings, going over their work, and giving regular feedback and evaluation or assessment. The learning experience is expected to be structured such that weekly supervision (half an hour or more) includes meetings with feedback giving and discussion of issues and concerns relative to the student's performance (PSU, n.d.).

Further, according to the study of Stupart and others (2010), the assessment component particularly among supervisees was an important factor in the supervisory process for the supervisors. Aside from the supervisees, other parties also have to be evaluated to provide a balanced picture of the learning experience. This contention is affirmed by Edwards and Kananack (2005) who indicated that a structured assessment of practicum should include multiple sources—self-evaluation, program evaluation, and other measures—because all these can provide input to enhance training outcomes. Falender and Shafranske (cited in Edwards & Kananack, 2005) claimed that feedback given to supervisors is also helpful in enhancing practicum experiences.

As Lamzon's (2015) study revealed, practicum teachers are already burdened by the balancing act between practicum tasks and other teaching or administrative functions. Problems arose from various sources, namely, student behaviors and attitudes, practicum sites, or even the academic institution itself. Ideally, in practicum settings, students obtain first-hand information about the settings and clients, tools, and techniques and skills along with values such as teamwork, leadership, and policy in addition to theory application (e.g., Florida Institute of Technology School of Psychology).

Basically, in the delivery of practicum, there are two supervisors—from the school and from the site—who oversee students while on practicum. Both are expected to have the necessary qualifications. The basic professional requirement needed of partner institutions is that they have competent personnel able to provide adequate supervision (Chaminuka & Kaputa, 2014). It is expected that the site supervisor orients the practicum students with the site's rules and regulations, spends a predefined number of hours in direct supervision, and performs other tasks relative to the practicum student's expected experiences in the setting. As a professional role model, he/she is expected to have adequate training, competence, and familiarity about the field as proven by his/her experience in the practice of the profession.

With regard to practices prior to placement, practicum teachers perform activities such as assessing readiness or qualifications of students, conducting orientation activities, and preparing documents and forms. These practices are closely congruent with what Al-Mekhlafi and Naji (2013) described in their study among practicum supervisors at the University of Sohar, Oman, showing that the course coordinator would meet all the practicum students prior to the start of the term, group them into fours or fives, and accompany them to the students' preferred school sites. However, unlike most schools in Lamzon's findings, the University of Sohar has a university supervisor who would designate a faculty member of the department as supervisor who then works with the cooperating teacher in planning the student's schedule. The university supervisor schedules visits three to four times each term, benefiting the students and other parties involved (Al-Mekhlafi & Naji, 2013).

According to Chaminuka and Kaputa (2014), the role of the internal supervisor includes providing direction and coordination in choosing the sites, acting accordingly on site, scheduling visits in advance, and obtaining feedback from the site. Understandably, whenever there are concerns brought by the site supervisor to his/her attention, he/she is expected to respond promptly. Generally, the internal supervisor is considered as the point person between the school and the practicum site and as such, he/she is expected to provide the necessary coordination for the students' practicum experiences (Chaminuka & Kaputa, 2014). Similarly, the academic or school-based supervisor is tasked to create partnership with site supervisors that will bring about opportunities for practicum students to obtain worthwhile work and life experiences. Ideally, he/she is expected to determine the readiness of

practicum sites and site supervisors to ensure that they are equipped to provide relevant work-learning experiences to practicum students (Hays & Clements, 2011). On the other hand, external supervision requires maintaining contact with the school so that any concern or update about the practicum students can easily be communicated. This can be done through phone or site visit. Likewise, site supervisors conduct scheduled feedback sessions about the student's performance and behavior in relation to pre-established goals. Aside from scheduled sessions, they also hold final evaluation with the student, and this is reviewed prior to submission to the internal supervisor (Chaminuka & Kaputa, 2014).

As part of their duties and responsibilities, practicum teachers adopt various ways of supervising their students, such as requiring students weekly journals and reflections as their way of knowing how the students are thinking, doing, and feeling on site; they also conduct weekly regular meetings. Edwards and Kananack (2005) affirm that frequent debriefing and obliging supervisees to have a daily practicum journal are expected to facilitate the development of abilities in attending to various situations they are likely to encounter in the future. Hodge and others (2003) also postulated that journaling affords students a means of identifying and addressing issues and concerns and of reflecting upon best practices. Fouad et al. (2009) also said that there is evidence that reflection and self-assessment facilitate supervisees to receive and assimilate supervisory feedback fundamental to supervision. Indeed, reflection and self-assessments are considered best supervisory practices that can be adopted by both supervisor and supervisee. At PSU, one requirement is a practicum log that shows the predetermined hours completed on weekly bases—a practicum journal containing weekly account of experiences focusing on primary concerns that arise from employing psychological principles in the practicum setting; personal reflections are expected to be included in the journal.

One of the toxic problems cited in students' practicum experiences is rejection, such as on the part of individuals in a gender minority. This finding supports the study of Chaminuka and Kaputa (2014) showing that students initially are confronted with problems in finding sites and even have to deal with antipathy at some agencies. Some practicum students also felt exploited. Lamzon's (2015) study indicated that some students felt taken advantage of by site supervisors and they experienced sexual harassment on site. Chaminuka

and Kaputa, however, maintain that resolution of problems or conflicts are easily facilitated when both internal (school) and external (site) supervisors have open communication; the same mechanisms were resorted to by the practicum teachers. Problems are also more easily resolved when there are documents that guide all parties involved. Such documents indicate the objectives of the practicum exposure as well as address issues and concerns.

Among the challenges faced by practicum teachers was time management. This experience is allied with the findings of a survey aimed to shed light on how the training standard was satisfied in the field of clinical supervision among training directors or designates of accredited clinical and counseling programs of the Canadian Psychological Association in which supervisors concurred that insufficiency of time for supervision was among the challenges they had to deal with (Hadjistavropoulos, Kehler, & Hadjistavropoulos, 2010). Because practicum teachers appear to be one in saying that time management is really essential, Bernard and Goodyear (1992, cited in Mateo, 2010) emphasized that one of the supervisor's roles concerns planning. However, Mateo's (2010) study conveyed that, among graduate students who had supervision experiences from their supervisors, there was absence of a definite plan schedule in conducting supervision.

Additionally, the number of students that practicum teachers handle was another challenge—ranging from ten to 50 in a class and from two to ten in specific sites. The data appear to portray a different scenario from the findings of Cochrane, Salyers, and Ding (2010) who noted that the number of interns supervised by almost half (46.9%) of the respondents is between one to five interns which is relatively manageable. Likewise, about 17.7% reported having six to ten interns, and another 23% stated supervising 11 to 50 interns. Understandably, this disparity can be attributed to the reality that the number of practicum students supervised in the undergraduate level is bigger than those in the graduate level.

As gleaned from teacher experiences, multitasking appears to be the usual routine among practicum teachers who have to juggle not only classroom tasks but also a set of other tasks integral to practicum teaching. Although classroom teaching comes naturally to them, going outside their comfort zones—that is, their classrooms—to do supervisory and networking functions requiring time and financial resources appears to be burdensome. Catapano (n.d.), in his article on multi-classroom management, is of the opinion that

doing so many things at the same time is actually counterproductive. Citing research findings conducted by Meyer, he said that our attention does not have the capability to focus on everything that we want to attend to because our brain is not structured for such. This means that we can perform at our best only when we focus on one thing or task at a given time.

In addition to the multitasking role, Fisher (2011, citing Blase, Blase, & Du, 2008; Lambert et al., 2006) mentioned that the lack of administrative support is among the reasons that teachers are experiencing stress and that social support is a buffer in preventing stress and burnout (Koniarek & Dudek, 1996). Moreover, Lahiri (n.d.) asserted that, when school management recognizes the contribution teachers provide, this makes them feel valued and such feelings are likely to encourage them to give their best despite the manifold responsibilities. Furthermore, Park (2002, cited in Mayben, n.d.) described the ironic phenomenon among excellent teachers who are most prone to burnout, contending that passion for their profession can push them to take on a number of responsibilities that can potentially zap their energy in the long run. In Lamzon's study, given the reality of the multitasking role of practicum teachers (teaching, administrative, supervisory, networking) plus the limited financial resources for their supervisory functions that understandably leaves them overburdened and strained, they are actually experiencing cognitive overload and chronic stress. Thomas (2009) proposed that, because majority of today's workers have to self-manage by utilizing their know-how and experience in performing their tasks, they need to innovate and problem-solve to be able to succeed in their assigned task. He also theorized four intrinsic rewards associated with self-management, namely, sense of meaningfulness, sense of choice, sense of competence, and sense of progress.

Collaborating with stakeholders is essentially among the responsibilities of practicum teachers. The study of Hatcher and colleagues (2012) involving practicum site coordinators conveyed that the absence of a professional organization among external practicum sites was a concern. Fortunately, the same study revealed that most site coordinators manifested interest in opportunities to contribute or share their expertise to improve training. Moreover, the mutual payback gained by both the practicum student and the site illustrates that learning takes place in a social context. Specifically, Vygotsky's idea of scaffolding (Bold & Chenoweth, 2008) assumes that an individual's cognitive processes develop and improve with discussion and consultation with others. In the practicum site, assistance of the site supervisor provides scaffolding in the form of mentoring, coaching, and supervision.

Practicum teachers appear to have adequate understanding of practicum supervision despite not having received any formal training for the role. Nevertheless, they particularly articulated that training is important and that they consider it a need. Generally, with no formal training in supervision, practicum teachers learned from their previous experiences of supervising students, and as they indicated, they kept improving as they accumulated experiences. Bernard (cited in Smith, 2009) stated that one's personal model of supervision keeps on improving and evolving as one reflects upon his/her experiences and gains insight. Also, Watkins (1997, cited in Mateo, 2010) remarked that, while counselor training is intensive, the opposite is true for the training of supervisors. If psychology students are expected to receive appropriate and excellent supervision while on practicum work, the psychology profession should require training programs.

Problems and Challenges: What Hasn't Quite Worked

"Busy and overburdened" are the words of Mateo (2010) for teachers of graduate practicum programs. And the teachers for undergraduate practicum spoke invariably about the challenge of time management. The implications include multiple roles, multitasking, and the teacher–student ratio that has been found less than ideal. On the other hand, stipulating a specific number of hours per site for at least two sites is also counterproductive on the part of the student who rushes to rack up hours and in the process misses out on optimal learning at the worksite. This is especially a problem when practicum is offered in the summer term—preparation and orientation require time, and many student applications are refused simply because particular institutions do not believe that practicum may be accomplished in such a short period.

Trust underlies placement of students in practicum sites. In majority of cases, universities are able to establish good working partnerships with institutions and agencies. However, some problems have been reported, including cases of sexual harassment and workplace exploitation that unfortunately supervisors are not made aware of except indirectly. In these cases, practicum teachers have simply pulled out their students and

severed ties with these practicum sites. Nevertheless, such cases illustrate some dangers students are exposed to, accepting reality in the workplace notwithstanding.

Inadequate supervision, including harmful supervision, has been a real problem in previous studies on clinical supervision. Such a problem may result from the lack of training in supervision of practicum teachers. Indeed, as has been pointed out, competence in supervision calls for adequate and formal training, and the current situation portrays the discrepancy between what professional organizations advocate and what is actually experienced by stakeholders in the delivery of supervision.

Best Practices: What Works

In as much as the status of practicum teaching that includes supervision leaves a lot of room for improvement, some points are worth considering, mainly in relation to the practicum subject itself, the practicum teacher, the academic institution, partner institutions, and relevant organizations. First, because practicum aims to prepare students for the eventual practice of their profession in the different fields of psychology, it is imperative that the treatment of the subject be reviewed and look especially into what has worked. Specific areas to look into include the following: 1) the schedule or semester during which the subject is to be offered, taking into account the number of settings and hours that students are required to complete, 2) the ratio between the practicum teacher and students as well as students and the site supervisor such that maximum supervision and learning can be ensured, 3) the students' preparedness to take on practicum work, and 4) the practicum teacher's administrative and academic functions where some balance may be attained.

Meantime, the practicum teacher plays a crucial role in the practicum experiences of the students as he/she is very much involved in all the phases of practicum implementation. Given the lack of training in practicum teaching and supervision, it has been found that he/she is much helped by institutional support, including in-service training, financial support, and collegial assistance. Elsewhere, it has been suggested that a practicum coordinator is different from a practicum teacher. The appointment of a practicum coordinator frees up the practicum teacher from many

administrative responsibilities. The academic institution is crucial in this initiative.

Some provisions that have worked and should continue are the following: 1) providing for supervision-related functions such as site visits and liaison/networking; 2) training in supervision and continuing professional development, including wellness programs; 3) clear guidelines for site selection; 4) strengthening partnership and collaboration and improving the practicum program through reviewing expectations, feedbacking, conferences, dialogue, and transfer of technology; 5) continuing education among academic institutions and partner institutions with regard to policies and standards of government agencies and professional organizations; 6) sharing of research outputs and best practices with partner institutions; 7) assessment mechanism to determine relevance as well as pinpoint areas of improvement; and 8) a comprehensive practicum guide.

As partners of the academe and recipients of the academe's graduates, partner or host institutions have to work harmoniously with academic institutions. Specifically, it is beneficial if they also provide the following: 1) appropriate working environment (with needed facilities and equipment); 2) supervisor with appropriate credentials, knowledge, and skills; and 3) a clear program that supports the academic institution's practicum program.

It would be ideal if government institutions such as CHED and PRC strengthen their coordination in matters pertaining to policies and standards that affect academic institutions and their faculty and staff. In particular, CHED and PRC have to look into the following: 1) ensuring that policies and standards are adhered to by the stakeholders; 2) accrediting institutions/ professional organizations offering courses and training in supervision; and 3) requiring HEIs offering graduate level courses to include supervision-related subjects in the curriculum.

In addition, the PAP, as the accredited integrated professional organization for psychology professionals, may consider the following: 1) taking initiatives to standardize the delivery of practicum supervision along with clinical supervision for better alignment with global standards; 2) specifying competencies needed for practicum supervision and clinical supervision to raise the standards of competence among would-be professionals and professionals, respectively; 3) having parallel standards in both practicum and clinical supervision so that future professionals are

better equipped; 4) offering seminar-workshops relative to supervision to better equip practicum teachers and site supervisors who are expected to train would-be professionals/practitioners; and 5) conducting activities that provide practicum teachers and coordinators the opportunity to share experiences and best practices.

The CHED, PRC, and PAP may continuously collaborate together for consistency, alignment, and clarity of policies and standards to promote common understanding among stakeholders. With the ASEAN integration, they may also look into clinical supervision among professionals and practitioners by spearheading initiatives to come up with a set of specific policies and standards to guide ethical practice. This is important not only because such initiatives will prepare individuals for the free flow of professionals across the global market but also because whatever is practiced in the professional/practitioner level will have a parallel effect on the lower level that includes both graduate and undergraduate students.

In sum, one of the best practices in practicum supervision begins with preparing practicum students well in advance of the practicum experience. Lamzon (2018) suggests course work that enables this readiness from the first to the third year of the psychology major's curriculum. By integrating immersion/exposure into each major subject, students may be able to crystallize which field of specialization they will be more interested in and will eventually pursue in their practicum/internship, and this will have more relevance in their future career. In addition, during the orientation period, there may be seminar-workshops to prime them for expected and unexpected experiences in actual work settings.

Because of the lack of course work and training for practicum teachers to prepare them for clinical supervision, they have been much dependent on the experiences and even documents handed down by former teachers of practicum. This would be a significant best practice—that previous teachers have actually documented their practicum supervision experience in a systematic and organized way. A practicum manual should ideally include the following: description of the practicum program, objectives, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, policies, guidelines, procedures (e.g., placement, handling complaints, and addressing problems), activities (orientation, seminars), documents (MOA, letters), directory of linkages, grading and bases for evaluation, and other pertinent information. The

regular practice of weekly journals should continue as these help to anticipate or alleviate problems of students in the work setting as well as keep the academe and industry stay connected and updated.

Academic institutions may consider institutionalizing the practicum program to allow them to position the school in the larger context beyond the academe. This niche could be developed by identifying students' field of interest early on. Institutionalizing practicum will necessitate having an overall practicum coordinator whose main function is to oversee and manage all practicum-related concerns. An individual cumulative profile of a student's academic, personal–social, and career records has to be in place and periodically updated as bases for practicum and/or career direction. The practicum coordinator is also expected to coach and mentor practicum teachers who are directly responsible for the welfare of the students. Most importantly, particular attention should be given on the training of practicum teachers as it is critically important for the profession to thrive.

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