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## Signature Pedagogies: Doctoral-Level Teaching Preparation

Casey A. Barrio Minton

In response to Baltrinic and Wachter Morris (2020), this article includes a history of teaching preparation in counselor education, exploration regarding current status of doctoral-level teaching preparation in counselor education, and review of literature regarding strategies for preparing doctoral students to teach. Supervision and mentorship emerged as key themes in this relatively new area of preparation. The author explores whether current practice is sufficient to identify these processes as signature pedagogies.

*Keywords:* signature pedagogies, counselor education, doctoral student, teaching

Baltrinic and Wachter Morris (2020) presented a compelling argument regarding the importance of considering signature pedagogies within the counseling profession. Certainly, the counseling profession is at a critical point in development in terms of greater context of professionalization, rapidly expanding enrollment in accredited counselor preparation programs, and movement toward an outcome-focused higher education context. Articulation of distinct and pervasive features of entry-level counselor preparation can be an important step forward in realizing a more unified and coherent professional identity. Additionally, formal articulation of signature pedagogies may provide a coherent way to organize the rapidly proliferating literature regarding teaching and learning practice in counselor preparation programs.

The focus on signature pedagogy raises a key question regarding how counselor education faculty members prepare the next generation of those who will teach and, in so doing, how they utilize signature pedagogies to prepare master's-level clinicians for the world of practice. This response focuses on whether the counseling profession has, or should have, signature pedagogies for doctoral-level teaching preparation. To contextualize this discussion, I begin with a review of historical foundations and literature regarding teaching preparation in doctoral-level counselor education and supervision

(CES) programs. Finally, I address readiness for and steps toward a signature pedagogy doctoral-level teaching preparation.

### Historical Foundations

Counseling is a relatively young profession, and formalization of processes for preparing professional counselors and counselor educators reaches back just over 40 years. Adkison-Bradley (2013) provided a history of doctoral-level standards for CES programs beginning with approval of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) doctoral guidelines in 1977 with unique focus on preparation of leaders and educators for the counseling profession. At that time, teaching as a core area was only suggested, not required. Shortly thereafter, the Council for the Accreditation for Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) was developed and adopted ACES doctoral guidelines as the first set of standards.

The role of teaching as part of doctoral-level curricula has evolved slowly since inception of CACREP. In 1988, CACREP released new doctoral standards in which supervision preparation, but not teaching preparation, was required. In 1994, new doctoral standards required curricular attention to instructional theory and methods for counselor preparation; however, the standards did not articulate specific requirements. By 2001, CACREP

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standards began requiring advanced practicum in which candidates linked practice to areas such as teaching and supervision; the guidelines still lacked specific curricular or field experience requirements to prepare doctoral-level candidates to teach.

The first major attention to teaching in the doctoral curriculum was not until 2009 when CACREP required that programs “provide evidence that doctoral students will demonstrate knowledge, skills, and practices” in five core areas, including teaching (p. 54). At the time, CACREP operationalized expectations by requiring that CES programs be able to assess the following learning outcomes:

- Understands the major roles, responsibilities, and activities of counselor educators.
- Knows instructional theory and methods relevant to counselor education.
- Understands ethical, legal, and multicultural issues associated with counselor preparation training.
- Develops and demonstrates a personal philosophy of teaching and learning.
- Demonstrates course design, delivery, and evaluation methods appropriate to course objectives.
- Demonstrates the ability to assess the needs of counselors in training and develop techniques to help students develop into competent counselors. (p. 55)

Still, CACREP did not prescribe specific learning activities nor did it require attention to teaching as part of CES field experiences.

The 2016 CACREP standards saw further development of teaching as a core curricular area for doctoral programs. Specifically, the accreditation body articulated areas in which programs must document curriculum delivery, including the following:

- Roles and responsibilities related to educating counselors
- Pedagogy and teaching methods relevant to counselor education
- Models of adult development and learning
- Instructional and curriculum design, delivery, and evaluation methods relevant to counselor education
- Effective approaches for online instruction

- Screening, remediation, and gatekeeping functions relevant to teaching
- Assessment of learning
- Ethical and culturally relevant strategies used in counselor preparation
- The role of mentoring in counselor education (pp. 34–35)

For the first time, CACREP moved toward requiring that doctoral candidates have an opportunity for field experience across core areas by requiring “supervised experiences in at least three of the five doctoral core areas” (p. 37). Although the standards stopped short of ensuring all doctoral students had an opportunity to practice teaching, this move increased the likelihood that programs would formalize teaching preparation via formal courses *and* field experiences in teaching.

As the focus on teaching in counselor education has increased, so has attention to operationalizing what is meant by teaching competency alongside the recognition that many counselor educators who teach today do so with minimal or no formal preparation. Specifically, ACES released *Best Practices in Teaching in Counselor Education* (Wood et al., 2016) to provide guidance and consideration regarding key elements of the teaching process. More recently, Swank and Houseknecht (2019) published a Delphi study of 19 experts’ perspective on teaching competencies in counselor education. Designed to guide development of teachers, results featured 152 competencies across 4 primary areas: knowledge, skills, professional behaviors, and dispositions.

As standards related to teaching preparation emerged, a small body of counselor education literature focused on status of teaching preparation and research regarding strategies for teaching preparation started to take shape. Examination of this literature may give cues regarding the presence of broad and specific features for doctoral-level teaching preparation.

### **Status of Teaching Preparation**

Several researchers have studied the status of teaching preparation within CES doctoral programs as reported through programmatic structure and stakeholder experiences. Together, these findings point to growing attention to both curricular and

practical experiences, with importance placed on feedback and support in the developmental process.

There is limited generalizable data regarding teaching practices at the programmatic level. Shortly after the 2009 CACREP standards were adopted, Hunt and Gilmore (2011) surveyed 16 doctoral coordinators. Three-quarters reported some requirement regarding teaching in their programs, 56% required a formal teaching internship, and 50% required didactic coursework on college teaching. As CACREP 2016 standards were being released, Barrio Minton and Price (2015) explored how programs prepared doctoral-level students for teaching. Among the 43% ( $n = 29$ ) of programs represented in the study, 93% required coursework in teaching, 86% required fieldwork in teaching, and 38% offered elective fieldwork. Although the nature of sampling does not allow comparison across time, and response bias likely inflated these numbers, it appears safe to conclude that formal teaching preparation is moving toward becoming standard in counselor education.

A number of researchers have investigated counselor educators' teaching preparation and perceptions during this same time frame. As CACREP 2009 standards were being implemented, Hall and Hulse (2010) surveyed 202 counselor education faculty members regarding their teaching preparation. Their results mirrored status of CACREP teaching standards prior to 2009. Only 36% had a course in college teaching, and 47% completed a teaching practicum. More recently, Taylor and Baltrinic (2018) surveyed 120 counselor educators regarding their teaching preparation. Their participants were experienced, with one-third having entered their doctoral programs with teaching training, and nearly two-thirds having had teaching experience prior to their doctoral programs. Approximately two-thirds had a doctoral-level course on teaching in counselor education, two-thirds completed field experience, and nearly one-half taught a graduate course solo as part of their training. Despite the prevalence of teaching experiences, only 60% received supervision of their teaching during this time. As with programmatic findings, this indicates a strong trend toward incorporating curricular and field experience training in teaching over a relatively short time period.

Several researchers have explored counselor education student and faculty perceptions regarding effective teaching preparation, and results indicate clear trends regarding importance of practical training. For example, counselor educators in one study rated teaching courses as not effective; rather, they most highly valued practical engagements such as teaching practica and other hands-on experiences (Hall & Hulse, 2010). Likewise, Hunt and Gilmore (2011) surveyed 14 doctoral students who had completed a teaching internship. Although they appreciated opportunities to develop syllabi and lesson plans in didactic courses, they recognized limitations in that they could not always use these artifacts in actual practice. Rather, their participants emphasized the importance of hands-on practice, support, and guidance in their duties. Finally, Waalkes et al. (2018) used consensual qualitative research to explore teaching preparation among nine tenure-line counselor educators who were within their first 2–4 years as faculty members and had some degree of doctoral teaching preparation. Almost all participants in their study had a course focused on teaching, and one-half graduated from programs where they were required to have some practical teaching experiences where they received feedback about their work. In their interviews, participants highlighted the importance of feedback and support, especially as they navigated disconnections between preparation to teach and the realities of teaching. Specifically, they characterized their teaching preparation as having too much focus on specific strategies and disseminating content and not enough focus on integration.

Taken together, it appears that attention to teaching preparation in doctoral programs has increased substantially over the last decade. This preparation appears to be both curricular and practical in nature, with importance placed on supervised practice and targeted feedback in teaching as a key, emergent theme. In the next section, I turn attention to strategies for teaching preparation as reported in published literature.

### **Strategies for Teaching Preparation**

As emphasis on teaching has increased in recent years, the field has experienced a proliferation of literature about teaching in general. Colleagues and I initially reviewed 230 articles focused on *Teaching and Supervision in Counseling* \* 2020 \* Volume 2 (2)

teaching and learning that were published in ACA and division journals from 2001–2010. Only five articles focused on doctoral-level teaching, only one of which focused on teaching preparation (Barrio Minton et al., 2014). From 2011–2015, we identified an additional 133 articles focused on teaching and learning; four articles specialized attention to the doctoral level, and not one was focused on teaching preparation (Barrio Minton et al., 2018). Together, these results suggest very strong focus on teaching as a practice with negligible focus on preparation to teach. However, we noted a substantial shift from 2001–2010, when articles were mostly conceptual and focused on specific methods and techniques for teaching, to 2011–2015, when articles began to be more research-focused, had greater attention to underlying structures and processes for teaching, and started incorporating evidence of student learning. In sum, it appears the counseling profession has been in an important transition.

More thorough examination regarding teaching preparation in doctoral-level programs, including attention to articles published outside ACA and its divisions and after 2015, illuminates some meaningful themes that may point to an emerging signature pedagogy for doctoral-level teaching preparation. The literature includes several accounts of collaborative teaching training experiences. Initially, Orr et al. (2008) developed the Collaborative Teaching Team Model in which doctoral students had developmentally appropriate, scaffolded opportunities for experience as lead instructor in a graduate-level course alongside enrollment within a general college course in pedagogy. The model began with experience as a coach (i.e., observing, some facilitation, and some grading) with later promotion to lead instructor and engagement in regular supervision. McCaughan et al. (2013) presented a case study of their own experiences in a doctoral teaching practicum wherein they took turns teaching 50-minute class periods of the undergraduate course *Introduction to Counseling*, observed each other, and met for class. Similarly, Elliott et al. (2019) reported an autoethnography of development in an instructional theory course in which a cohort taught a one-credit undergraduate course, took turns facilitating, and utilized class time for supervision and feedback. Their findings highlighted internal experi-

ences of fear and self-doubt; the importance of authenticity and openness; and the importance of learning in groups for building teaching self-efficacy. Across these models, the importance of a collaborative process in which there was immediacy of feedback and reflection emerged as critical. Indeed, this process often took precedence over more didactic components of accompanying training.

Several other researchers have documented teaching preparation experiences in doctoral training environments. Baltrinic et al. (2016) explored mentorship of coteaching with 10 doctoral students across three different programs. Their findings highlighted the importance of relationships with faculty members alongside a “graduate and progressive operational structure that helps participants learn how to teach” (p. 35). Participants spoke to the importance of developmentally appropriate relationships, gradually increased responsibilities, and supervision as duties increased in complexity. Although most research has focused on student (or former student) experiences, Baltrinic et al. (2018) conducted a Q-study of 25 faculty members who had experience mentoring doctoral students in graduate teaching. Results pointed to three primary factors in their teaching mentorship styles: supervisor, facilitator, and evaluator. The supervisor style was centered on coteaching an entire course, providing examples, helping mentees learn from mistakes, and providing feedback. The facilitator style was more egalitarian in nature and centered on strength-based feedback and support. Finally, the evaluator style featured a critical learning environment with more directive, content-driven mentorship and corrective feedback.

### **Signature Pedagogies for Doctoral-Level Teaching Preparation**

A review of historical trends, status of teaching preparation, and strategies for teaching preparation yield allow for two definitive conclusions. First, formal experiences specific to teaching are becoming mainstream in doctoral-level programs. Second, supervision and mentorship have emerged as the most central themes related to teaching preparation in counselor education. Information on classroom-based preparation for teaching alone is virtually nonexistent. Rather, the literature highlights the

importance of practical, hands-on experiences concurrent with timely and constructive feedback. The question, then, is whether these observations are sufficient to comprise a signature pedagogy related to teaching preparation. Although we begin to see glimmers of what may become a signature pedagogy, there is simply not enough history or foundation to conclude the presence of signature pedagogies for doctoral-level teaching preparation.

In terms of signature pedagogies, broad features are distinct and pervasive within the profession (Baltrinic & Wachter Morris, 2020). It is important to acknowledge that the counseling profession has historically included very little attention to mainstream teaching and learning foundations in its programs or literature (see Barrio Minton et al., 2018; Barrio Minton et al., 2014). Before counselor educators explore what is unique about teaching preparation in our field, we may need to design programs to level up to what works in teaching preparation across fields. Certainly, a majority of the CACREP 2016 standards regarding teaching are interdisciplinary and foundational in nature with only a few unique to the counseling profession. Still, the presence of a course on teaching and opportunity for practical experience in teaching is moving toward becoming a broad feature of a signature pedagogy. However, this transition is relatively recent, and there is very little information about what courses regarding teaching in counselor education entail and how counselor educators teach them.

Specific features of signature pedagogies may be identifiable at the course level with attention to what teachers do (surface structures), underlying assumptions for how teachers facilitate learning (deep structures), and why teachers do this (implicit structures; Baltrinic & Wachter Morris, 2020). The literature includes very little attention to methods for fostering knowledge and skills within teaching courses, something critical for identifying specific features of signature pedagogies. Although several authors (Hull & Hulse, 2010; Hunt & Gilmore, 2011) noted inadequacy of isolated, didactic approaches to teaching preparation, the scarcity of information in this area does not allow conclusions regarding which teaching-related knowledge or skills

instructors were developing, how they were developed, why they were addressed, or the degree to which they appear across programs.

Swank and Houseknecht (2019) worked to address this gap in the literature with initial development of teaching competencies for the profession. Still, a large number of the competencies proposed are appropriate for teaching in general (e.g., “create an inviting and welcoming classroom environment,” “facilitate small- and large-group discussion in class,” and “use learning management system to enhance learning”) or to counselor dispositions (e.g., “adhere to ethical code,” “being humble,” “being curious”; pp. 169–172) rather than to the specific practice of developing master’s-level counselors. I suspect the conversation is not yet developed enough to conclude specific features of teaching design in counselor education.

Similarly, there is relatively little attention to the focus of teaching skill development even within practical experiences. Despite multiple accounts regarding the importance of supervision and mentorship within practical teaching training (e.g., Baltrinic et al., 2016, 2018; Elliott et al., 2019; McCaughan et al., 2013; Orr et al., 2008; Waalkes et al., 2018), very few resources give insight to the specific skills or dispositions enacted in the experiential process or in supervisors’ reasoning behind selection of these skills. As I suspect readers will find in other responses in this issue, supervision and mentorship comprise a pervasive and unifying structure in the counseling profession in general, and in doctoral-level programs specifically. It makes sense that early dialogues about how the profession best prepares teachers began with a process that is both foundational to the field and appropriate for complex, poorly defined tasks. Still, limited literature does not provide a sense of how pervasive supervision and mentorship are in teaching preparation in general or how they impact overall development of counselor educators’ teaching skills and, in turn, the master’s-level counselors they prepare.

### **Moving Forward**

In time, I believe there will and should be signature pedagogy related to teaching preparation in counselor education. Like strong course design, development of this signature pedagogy should come

only after the counseling profession has done the important work of clarifying its professional identity, priorities, and signature processes for developing master's-level clinicians. The old adage "counselor, know thyself" comes to mind. As we become more clear regarding who we are, what we do well, and how we need to grow, we are better positioned to understand long-term priorities and vision for the counseling profession as a whole. This understanding is essential for developing meaningful approaches for preparing teachers for the counseling profession.

Centering development of signature pedagogies on the needs of masters'-level counselors reminds us of a core purpose of doctoral-level preparation: to prepare professionals who provide workforce development for professional counseling. Over the course of their careers, doctoral students have the potential to impact hundreds or thousands of master's-level counselors who, in turn, impact an exponential number of consumers in clinical and school settings. As Shulman (2005) said, "professional education is not education for understanding alone; it is preparation for accomplished and responsible practice in the service of others" (p. 53). Thus, the broad and specific features of a doctoral-level teaching pedagogy must be inextricably linked to priorities for knowledge, skills, and dispositions of frontline professional counselors. Once we have clearly identified learning outcomes alongside broad and specific features of master's-level preparation, we can begin the process of designing doctoral-level teaching practices to meet these demands with clarity and intentionality. In so doing, we may address prior criticisms of doctoral teaching course experiences as flat and lacking in practicality (e.g., Hall & Hulse, 2010; Hunt & Gilmore, 2011; Waalkes et al., 2018).

Exploration of professional priorities may bring us back to signature pedagogies already embedded within the counseling profession. Arguably, counseling supervision is among the most developed signature pedagogies within our profession, and the importance of supervision emerged clearly in what we know about doctoral-level teaching preparation: new teachers grow from engagement with mentors in an intentional process of feedback, application, and self-reflection. The key, then, will

be to converge classroom preparation and supervision so that we do not simply model teaching practice without clarity of intent in an "apprenticeship of observation" (Shulman, 2005, p. 57). Just as master's-level programs ensure students have foundation knowledge and emerging skills before they begin their first field placements, doctoral-level programs should require foundational knowledge about teaching and learning before releasing doctoral students to teach.

While we clarify understanding of signature pedagogies and priorities at the master's-level, educators engaged in teaching preparation may start with shoring up foundational knowledge in teaching and learning in general. In this process, we can ask whether knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for strong teaching are unique to counselor education or perhaps captured in more general educational processes that cut across fields. In so doing, we may uncover important cues to quality graduate education processes *and* for identification of signature pedagogies for teaching preparation. Given that most counselor education programs are housed in colleges of education, we might benefit from expertise and practices utilized in curriculum and instruction programs as they may inform essential understanding about how learning works and what baseline curriculum design and delivery should entail. Such an exploration may help those who teach doctoral-level teaching courses ensure they are keeping coursework focused on the how and why of course design and delivery rather than specific techniques or strategies counselor educators use in various master's-level courses, a focus that is clear in teaching and learning texts in general but often lacking in those specific to counselor education.

Shulman (2005) suggested that professional education programs look to other professions for insight into opportunity to improve teaching and learning. For example, we might learn from a focus on complex case dialogue found in law or a focus on rounds as found in medicine. Given the complex, parallel nature of our tasks, we may also learn from how sister fields such as psychology, social work, and nursing prepare their teachers of clinicians. Although a narrow body of literature, this cross-disciplinary approach likely provides clues for enhancing practice.

Similarly, counselor educators may explore methods for developing teaching knowledge and skills at the doctoral level, especially as it relates to optimal connection between more didactic or information foundations (e.g., adult learning models, curriculum design and delivery) and practical enactment of skills in real-world settings. Common assignments in doctoral-level teaching courses include development of teaching philosophies, syllabi, and artifacts related to teaching (e.g., lesson plans and materials, sample rubrics, and assignments). Some may also include lecture-based delivery of sample lessons. Unfortunately, stakeholders report such experiences as superficial given complexities of demands in actual graduate classrooms. This may signal the need for greater attention to understanding master's-level student needs, complexities of course design in the context of program design, and embeddedness of signature pedagogies, which are unlikely to be lecture-based. The key will be to identify developmentally appropriate strategies for learning these complex skills. Given the importance of mentoring and supervision in counselor educator teaching development, this may include concurrent engagement in coursework and field experience, perhaps allowing for real-time observation of teaching and analysis in context of what students are learning about teaching. Later field experiences may build on foundations with increasing levels of responsibility in the classroom and sustained connection to how classroom experience connects with didactic foundations. Such an approach will require intentionality of supervision and feedback in a manner that goes beyond current apprenticeship practice. Empirical investigation of the impact of these processes on actual teaching skill development (i.e., investigation beyond stakeholder perceptions and experiences) may shed deeper understanding of whether these procedures are effective.

Together, these explorations may help us take the next steps forward in developing meaningful and relevant signature pedagogies for the counseling profession. To more fully develop a signature pedagogy for doctoral-level teaching preparation, we will need concurrent development of optimal methods for teaching training adopted across programs and an evidence base to support their effectiveness. This exploration must include and go beyond super-

vision and mentorship as primary elements of developing teachers of counselors, thus integrating classroom-based components alongside field experience practices.

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