A Model for Educating and Training School Counselor Directors

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Abstract

This mixed-method study utilized four methods of data collection: participant observation, focus group, national questionnaire, and document analysis to explore the educational experiences of school counselor directors. Data analysis suggests significant differences between participants’ beliefs of requisite knowledge and skills for their position and the degree to which their education prepared them. Offered is a school counselor leadership program combining educational leadership and advanced counseling courses to educate and train school counselor directors.

Keywords: school counselor director, school counselor supervision, counselor education, school counseling
A Model for Educating and Training School Counselor Directors

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is the division of the American Counseling Association (ACA) that supports the development of professional school counselors. The ASCA published the ASCA National Model (2012), which provides a framework for a comprehensive school counseling program that includes four quadrants: Foundation, Delivery, Management, and Accountability. The National Model also offers a detailed account of the role, function, and competencies of professional school counselors. It specifically addresses how the proper use of professional school counselors and implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program can enhance the education of the whole student at the elementary, middle, or high school level (ASCA, 2005).

The American School Counselor Association also acknowledges the necessity of district-level school counselor directors. It states that a school counselor director provides support for the development, implementation, and maintenance of a comprehensive school counseling program at each school within its jurisdiction (ASCA, 2013). School counselor directors also provide leadership, ensure availability and conduct employment evaluation based on the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012).

Although ASCA discusses the necessity of school counselor directors and even outlines the roles and functions of this position, it does not provide any direction regarding the most effective methods of educating and training for this position. The lack of research in this area is the reason behind the lack of current national standards for educating and training school counselor directors. Rather than conducting research that would lead to the development of national standards for school counselor directors, researchers dedicated their attention to the examination of the training of master’s level school counselors. This focus is a result of the current accreditation requirements that shape the educational experience of the counselors-in-training.

Baird (2011) and Dollarhide and Miller (2006) studied the preparation of school counselors in primary and secondary settings, particularly in the area of field experiences. Other research examined the perceptions of school counselor effectiveness, as well as the usefulness of available supervision (Borders & Usher, 1992; Henderson & Lampe, 1992). During a school counseling master’s education program, there is adequate supervision, both on-site and through the university, during the practicum and internship field experiences (Peterson & Deuschle, 2006; Studer & Oberman, 2006). However, Linton & Deuschle (2006) note that clinical supervision of school counselors following graduation may not be as effective as desired.

Researchers also examined the reason behind the lack of effective supervision within a school setting and some suggest that there is incongruence between the daily tasks of school counselors and models of clinical supervision most often utilized (Luke, Ellis, & Bernard, 2011). Limited research exists on whether school counselor directors receive or experience “best practices” methods in their formal education and training. Although it is vital to continue to conduct research on the development of professional school counselors, researchers must also allocate attention to explore what resources are necessary to educate and train a school counselor director to the standards established by ASCA.
Clinical Supervision

Researchers consistently find that clinical supervision is less frequently available for school counselors than for their peers employed in mental health environments (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Henderson & Lampe, 1992; Herlihy, Gray, & McCollum, 2002). Research studies note that only approximately 25% of practicing school counselors receive either individual or group clinical supervision (Page, Pietrzak, & Sutton 2001; Roberts & Borders, 1994). However, the majority of school counselors report that they believe that they would benefit from receiving clinical supervision. Questionnaire respondents most often cited that they would like assistance in working with case conceptualization and counseling interventions (Page et al., 2001; Roberts & Borders, 1994).

Models of Supervision

As researchers recognized the sparse literature in this area and began investigating this issue, one of the conclusions was that a poor fit between available models of supervision and the current roles and functions of school counselors is a possible factor in the lack of clinical supervision. As a result, researchers developed several models of supervision in an attempt to rectify the problem such as Luke and Bernard’s (2006) School Counselor Supervision Model; Wood and Rayle’s (2006) Goals, Roles, Functions, and Systems Model; and Peterson and Deuschle’s (2006) Supervision Model for School Counselors. The development of these models gives those providing supervision to school counselors some viable frameworks that address both theories of supervision and specific strategies that target the unique functions of school counselors.

Both school counselors-in-training and practicing school counselors can participate in training regarding these supervision models. Bernard and Goodyear (2004) compared a supervisor selecting a supervision model to counselors selecting a theory of counseling as their framework. Just as counselors need to be able to implement a variety of theories depending on the combination of client demographics, presenting problem, and counseling setting factors, supervisors also need to be able to match the supervision model with supervisee factors. Even though school counselors of all levels can utilize these supervision models, researchers have concentrated on supervision practices for counselors-in-training or novice school counselors. This may be because of the lack of supervision provided to school counselors who completed their master’s program or who are no longer novice counselors (Borders & Usher, 1992; Herlihy et al., 2002). Although models of school counseling supervision exist and the majority of school counselors are eager to participate in clinical supervision, the issue remains whether those who are providing supervision are adequately trained in supervision practices.

Supervision Training

Typically, training in supervision occurs in doctoral-level programs. Dollarhide and Miller (2006) recognized that supervisors need quality training in school counseling supervision models to become an expert. To address this issue, some researchers point to a variety of professional development options including conferences, webinars, or reviews of literature.
(Roberts & Borders, 1994; Studer, 2005). Researchers are also looking to preparation programs for a possible solution in entry-level supervision training, as well as encouraging positive attitudes towards post-master’s supervision.

School counseling educators could incorporate supervision models into the curriculum of their master’s program. This option would allow school counseling students to become familiar with the supervision models and strategies necessary for developing quality school counselors. Students would also gain basic supervision skills, which will prepare them to become proficient site-supervisors when they are practicing professional school counselors. This route would provide an opportunity to develop fundamental supervision skills; however, it would not replace the more advanced doctoral-level course in supervision (Portman, 2002; Roberts & Morotti, 2001).

There has been significant reform in the school counseling field within the past several decades. These reform movements influenced the roles, functions, and training programs in both professions. However, these reform movements only partially addressed the topic of district-level school counselor directorship. The American Association for Counseling and Development (AACD), currently known as the American Counseling Association (ACA), first emphasized the importance of supervision as a method of assisting in the development of less experienced professionals (AACD, 1990). The Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), the American Counseling Association (ACA), and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) continue the support of supervision in their respective ethical guidelines by stating that supervisors must receive sufficient training in supervision skills, practices, and techniques (ACA, 2014; ACES, 1993; ACES, 2011; ASCA, 2004; ASCA, 2010). The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) also recognized the importance of leadership development by including it in its standards for doctoral students (CACREP, 2009).

Additionally, ASCA provided a rationale for school counselor directors, as well as a description of the roles and functions of this vital position (ASCA, 2013). Despite clear and consistent assertions from leading national organizations and governing bodies regarding the necessity of quality supervision and leadership, as well as mandates for training if providing these services, national standards outlining how to educate and train school counselor directors have yet to develop. Because of a scarcity of research, there is a lack of knowledge about the effectiveness of the formal education and training of district-level school counselor directors. Consequently, making inferences about this issue is only possible by piecing together information gained from other semi-related research studies.

**Methodology**

The researcher used a mixed-method study to examine the formal education and training experiences of school counselor directors. The goal was to better understand the level of congruence between the knowledge and skills needed for this position and the existing opportunities to obtain them.
Research Questions

The researcher explored the education and training required to generate the caliber of school counselor director advocated by ASCA. Primarily, this study explored the following research questions:

1. What knowledge and skills are necessary to be an effective school counselor director?
2. Does the educational training school counselor directors receive provide them with the knowledge and skills required to be effective in their position?
3. What opportunities or limitations do counselor educators believe they have to meet the educational needs of school counselor directors?
4. Given synthesized findings from Research Questions 1-3: What pedagogy and clinical training are necessary to train school counselor directors?

Design

This study used a mixed-method research approach to investigate the central research questions using both qualitative and quantitative methods for collecting, analyzing, and representing data. The researcher employed four methods of data collection to achieve a multidimensional view of the participants’ educational and training experiences, and assess what they believe were the necessary knowledge and skills required to be an effective school counselor director. Using multiple methods of data collection provided insightful information that supported the different voices and allowed participants to convey their perceptions from multiple sources. Additionally, utilizing four methods of data collection enabled the researcher to triangulate the data to increase the validity of the study.

Qualitative methods. Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist grounded theory methodology was the basis of the qualitative portion of this research. Charmaz (2006) stated that constructivist grounded theory offers a balance between positivism and postmodernism. The purpose of grounded theory is to develop a novel model or theory “grounded” in the data, gathered, analyzed, and triangulated in a rigorous, methodical research process. Although Charmaz followed the same format as her predecessors in grounded theory, she deviated from them regarding the relationship between the researcher and participants. She proposed that participants and the researcher co-construct the data. This is significant as it permeates all aspects of the study from beginning to end. The concept of co-constructed data reinforces the notion that the knowledge, experiences, and perceptions of both the researcher and participants influence the research study.

Constructivist grounded theory utilizes triangulation, a process of including three or more types of data to create clarity and credibility of the researcher’s analysis (Charmaz, 2006). The multiple data sources used in this study provide a more comprehensive understanding of the necessary elements of educating school counselor directors to meet ASCA’s requirements of this position. The qualitative component of this study included three methods of data collection: participant observation, a focus group, and document analysis.
**Participant observation.** The researcher conducted participant observations with school counselor directors within city and county public school systems in the Mid-South. In total, over 600 hours of participant observations occurred over a seven-month period. Participant observations included a variety of activities such as program evaluations and documentation; professional development for school counselors, administrators, and teachers; consultation and supervision with school counselors; and attendance at school board meetings. During this time, the researcher took extensive notes to analyze and convert into memos. The memos included overt and covert descriptions as well as the researcher’s thoughts and reactions to experiences related to the observations.

**Focus group.** Focus groups explored the participants’ experiences and opinions on the education and training of school counselor directors using a semi-structured format. The time commitment was three hours. Prior to conducting the focus group, counselor educators who are National Certified School Counselors (NCSC) and Professional School Counselors (PSC) reviewed the focus group interview guide two times for content validity.

**Participants.** The sample of participants in the focus group included three school counseling directors of a public school system in the Mid-South, as well as the School Counseling Coordinator and the Doctoral Program Coordinator at a public urban university in the Mid-South. The focus group sample included two men and three women. Four of the participants in the focus group identified as Caucasian and one participant identified as African American. The researcher selected participants in the focus group because of their roles as school counselor directors or counselor educators. The counselor educators teach in both masters and doctoral CACREP accredited counseling programs and have positions directly related to school counseling and clinical practicum and internship field placements. Participants are school counselor directors and stakeholders in the education and training of doctoral counselor education candidates who have an emphasis in school counselor leadership.

**Document analysis.** The researcher completed an analysis of multiple documents published by ASCA to contribute to the data on the most useful method of educating and training a school counselor director. The roles and functions of a director of school counseling, set by ASCA, provide the standard of the caliber of school counselor director that an educational program should produce.

**Quantitative methods.** This study also contained one quantitative method of data collection: a questionnaire administered nationally by Qualtrics. Response rates for web-based or email-based questionnaires greatly vary. Although the questionnaire garnered only a 13% response rate, response rates for web and email-based questionnaires are often between 10 and 20% when the participants are not in a cohort but nearly 70% when the participants are in a cohort such as students within a graduate program. (Birnbaum, 2004; Witmer, Coleman, & Katzman, 1999).

**Questionnaire.** The questionnaire inquired about the participants’ education and training, as well as the knowledge and skills that they believe are necessary to perform the roles and functions of a school counselor director as set forth by ASCA. The questionnaire included 16 Likert-scale and 3 open-ended questions. Each Likert-scale question had three components
that inquired about the participants’ knowledge, use of, and preparation in the seven content
areas established from Research Question 1. The questionnaire incorporated two distinct sets of
responses to the Likert-scale questions. Both sets included five points. The first set inquired
about the participants’ knowledge and use of certain skills. The available responses for the first
set were as follows: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The second
set inquired about the participants’ opinion on the degree to which their program prepared them
for the knowledge and use of these skill areas. The available responses for the second set were
as follows: expertly, adequately, neutral, minimally, and not at all. Prior to distributing the
questionnaire, counselor educators who are also National Certified School Counselors and
Licensed Professional School Counselors reviewed it twice for content validity.

Participants. The sample of participants in the national questionnaire included 20
district-level school counselor directors in school systems throughout the United States. The
questionnaire sample consisted of 16 women and 4 men. The participants included 17
Caucasians, 2 African Americans, and 1 Hispanic. The researcher used the process of random
sampling to select participants from a list serve of school counselor directors provided by ASCA.
The participants in both the focus group and national questionnaire varied in race, ethnicity,
gender, ability, and age. The researcher did not attempt to control for these demographic
variables.

Data Analysis

Qualitative Analysis

The researcher used coding (initial and focused), categorizing, and memoing to analyze
the qualitative data from participant observation entries, transcriptions of the focus group and
responses from open-ended questions on the questionnaire, and literature published by ASCA.
The codes materialized by exploring the collected data and interpreting meanings within it. The
process of coding used in constructivist grounded theory is line-by-line coding, which is a
method of interpreting segments of data and assigning them a label that will ultimately code,
categorize, and summarize each piece of data. Therefore, coding is the first step in the process of
transitioning from raw data to analytic interpretations. The researcher repeated the process of
coding numerous times to interact with the data. Upon coding and categorizing each individual
method of data collection, the researcher then examined the data across all qualitative methods
for overarching categories that were useful in answering the research questions. The investigator
wrote memos from the analytic interpretations. The memos are notes that detailed what the
investigator experienced and learned. This critical method enables the investigator to become
intimate with the data and to analyze it early and throughout the research process (Charmaz,
2006).

Quantitative Analysis

The researcher used descriptive statistics and a Repeated Measures One Way Analysis of
Variance (ANOVA) to analyze data from the Likert-scale questions on the questionnaire. The
descriptive statistics assessed the mean Likert ratings of each of the seven content areas
established via Research Question 1. A Repeated Measures 1 x 3 ANOVA analyzed the Likert
ratings to determine if there were significant differences among the participants’ perceptions of their knowledge, skill, and degree of program preparation for each of the seven content areas. First, the investigator clustered the questions from the questionnaire based on content area. Then, the investigator summed scores for each participant’s responses to the questions within that content area concerning their perception of knowledge, skill, and program preparation.

Although Mauchly’s test indicated that the data violated the assumption of sphericity on each ANOVA, the researcher used the Greenhouse-Geiser test to correct for this issue and satisfy the major assumptions needed to conduct an ANOVA procedure. For any significant F ratios, defined by an alpha level of $p < 0.05$, the researcher completed a Bonferroni post-hoc test to discover which specific means differed.

**Findings**

Due to the breadth of the mixed-methods design, the researcher disaggregated the data from the qualitative and quantitative procedures utilized for each research question. The preceding combined qualitative and quantitative data analysis relates to the Research Questions in the following manner.

**Research Question 1**

What knowledge and skills are necessary to be an effective school counselor director? The researcher used qualitative methods including coding, categorizing, and memoing data from participant observation entries, transcriptions of the focus group and responses from open-ended questions on the questionnaire, and literature published by ASCA to explore this question. From the combined analysis, the investigator ascertains that the knowledge and skills in the following seven content areas are necessary to be effective in the position of school counselor director:

1. **ASCA National Model.** The ASCA National Model is a framework for a comprehensive school counseling program developed by ASCA.

2. **Data as a Means to Advocate for School Counselors.** In an era of educational accountability, school counselors use data to evaluate their programs and interventions in an effort to advocate for counseling initiatives.

3. **Clinical Supervision.** Providing clinical supervision opportunities to school counselors will allow them to seek assistance in managing their comprehensive school counseling program, implementing a specific counseling intervention, and addressing professional issues such as “burn-out” or countertransference.

4. **Professional Development.** Offering professional development to school counselors is essential in providing information on “best practices” school counseling programs and interventions. Professional development for administrators and staff is also important to educate them regarding the role and function of school counselors.

5. **Evaluation of School Counselors.** Participation in the hiring process helps to ensure the employment of competent school counselors throughout the district. School counselor
directors are also responsible for advocating that school counselors be evaluated based on the standards provided by ASCA.

6. Budget Operations. One responsibility of a school counselor director is to seek funding opportunities and to maintain an operating budget for their department.

7. Crisis Response. School counselor directors should be involved in the development and implementation of a systemic crisis prevention and response plan. They also often participate in immediate and long-term crisis response teams.

Research Question 2

Does the educational training school counselor directors receive provide them with the knowledge and skills required to be effective in their position? The researcher used qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis to explore this question. Data suggests that there is a lack of congruence between the participants’ educational preparation programs and the knowledge and skills required to be effective in their position as a school counselor director. The investigator used the seven knowledge and skills content areas that emerged via Research Question 1 to answer this research question.

Qualitative analysis. The researcher analyzed data from participant observation entries, transcriptions of the focus group and responses from open-ended questions on the questionnaire, and literature published by ASCA using coding, categorizing, and memo methods. The analysis proposes that school counseling preparation programs address two content areas from Research Question 1: (a) the ASCA National Model and (b) Data as a Means to Advocate for School Counselors. Additionally, both school counseling and educational leadership and administration preparation programs address the following two content areas: (a) Professional Development and (b) Crisis Response. However, both preparation programs either ignored or devoted minimal attention to three content areas: (a) Clinical Supervision, (b) Evaluation of School Counselors, and (c) Budget Operations. The researcher then compared these analyses to the outcomes of the responses to the Likert-scale questions on the questionnaire.

Quantitative analysis. The investigator analyzed data from the questionnaire using a Repeated Measures One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) then disaggregated the data analysis per the following seven content areas. There was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in the mean scores among the Knowledge, Skill, and Program focus areas within each of the seven content areas. The researcher conducted a Bonferroni post hoc analysis to determine which specific means differed. The following table illustrates the differences in mean scores between the focus areas of Knowledge, Skill, and Program within each content area.
Table 1

*Differences in Mean Scores, Standard Error and significance within each content area.*

1. **ASCA National Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Area</th>
<th>Focus Area</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program</td>
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<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
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<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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2. **Data as a Means to Advocate**

<table>
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<th>Focus Area</th>
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<th>Sig.</th>
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<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.05</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program</td>
<td>0.43</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.001</td>
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3. **Clinical Supervision**

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<td>Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.001</td>
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4. Professional Development

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<th>Focus Area</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Knowledge</td>
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<td>0.163</td>
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5. Evaluation of School Counselors

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<td>Skill</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.348</td>
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<td>0.51</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill</td>
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<td>0.001</td>
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6. Budget Operations

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<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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<td>0.169</td>
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<td>Program</td>
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<td>Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>0.001</td>
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7. Crisis Response

<table>
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<th>Focus Area</th>
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<td>0.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Program</td>
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<td>Knowledge</td>
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<td>0.17</td>
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<td>Knowledge</td>
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<td>Program</td>
<td>Skill</td>
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The Bonferroni post hoc analysis shows that there is a significant difference in the participants’ rating of their knowledge and skill compared to the level of program preparation for all seven content areas: The ASCA National Model, Data as a Means to Advocate for School Counselors, Clinical Supervision, Professional Development, Evaluation of School Counselors, Budget Operations, and Crisis Response. Regardless of the content area, the participants responded that they had a slightly higher level of knowledge than skill. Additionally, the participants rated their knowledge and skills in each of these content areas significantly higher than the degree to which their program prepared them for these content areas. Thus, the analysis of the quantitative data from the questionnaire had similar results as the qualitative component of this study.

Research Question 3

What opportunities or limitations do counselor educators believe they have to meet the educational needs of school counselor directors? The researcher used qualitative methods to explore this question by coding, categorizing and memoing data from the transcription of the focus group. The counselor educators discussed the lack of interaction between counseling programs, at either the master’s or doctoral level, and educational leadership and administration programs. They stated that the demand of meeting accreditation requirements while simultaneously competing with other programs regarding financial and time commitments limits cross-curricular opportunities. However, the participants acknowledged the need for addressing the significant lack of adequate educational opportunities in the specialized area of school counselor leadership. The counselor educators suggested a dedicated curriculum path that incorporates both advanced counseling and educational leadership and administration courses. They stated that the program of studies be consistent across programs but the method of delivery, such as traditional or web-based, and the type of program, such as a certification track, Education Specialist degree, or elective focus within a doctoral program, remain flexible to meet the needs of the university implementing the program. Lastly, the counselor educators affirmed that if a university already offers programs in counselor education and educational leadership and administration, developing and implementing a hybrid program targeting the education and training of school counselor directors should not drain financial or faculty resources.
Research Question 4

Given synthesized findings from Research Questions 1-3: What pedagogy and clinical training are necessary to train school counselor directors? The resulting product proposes a model for educating and training school counselor directors. The three themes that surfaced from the reoccurring categories were: (a) role of the school counselor director, (b) lack of congruence between the education received and needed knowledge and skills, and (c) suggestions for an educational model. These final themes are the foundation of the model for educating and training school counselor directors.

A Recommended Model for School Counselor Leadership

From the foregoing data, the researcher is proposing a School Counselor Leadership program. The School Counselor Leadership program fuses the fields of school counseling and educational leadership and administration. This hybrid program recognizes the required knowledge and skills from both disciplines to be a successful leader in this specialized field.

Counselor educators could incorporate the School Counselor Leadership program into an existing degree program or develop it as an individual certification program. Below is a description of the suggested courses:

1. The Advanced Counseling Techniques course should expand upon the course in basic counseling techniques offered at the master’s-level and should review advanced counseling theories and techniques. Additionally, this course should provide experiential opportunities in both individual and group counseling situations where students could implement the skills they have learned with appropriate age groups that deal with the developmental issues commonly experienced in the social, personal, and academic development of children and adolescents.

2. The Clinical Supervision course should differentiate between administrative and clinical supervision. Models of clinical supervision specifically developed for supervision of school counselors within a K-12 educational environment such as Luke and Bernard’s (2006), Wood and Rayle’s (2006), and Peterson and Deuschle’s (2006) models should be included in the course. This course should also have a substantial application component where the students will gain experience providing clinical supervision to master’s-level school counseling practicum students. During the application portion of this course, students should receive individual and group clinical supervision to ensure that they are providing adequate clinical supervision to the master’s-level school counseling practicum students they are serving.

3. The Educational Policy/Law and Ethics course should specifically target the national and state laws that affect K-12 schools. This course should also provide an in-depth review of both the ACA and ASCA ethical standards. Students will use role-play exercises to practice navigating common legal and ethical dilemmas that occur in the field of primary and secondary education. Professionals with experience in handling typical legal and ethical dilemmas that confront school counselor directors should analyze these experiential activities.
4. The Budget Operations/Grant Proposal Writing course should introduce students to issues regarding educational finance. Students should gain knowledge and skill in securing financial resources to operate their programs. They should also learn how to develop and maintain an operational budget for their department. The application component of this course should be for students to develop a proposed operational budget for their department.

5. The Crisis Intervention in Education course should build upon the basic skills of crisis intervention developed in a master’s-level course. This course should focus on how to coordinate systemic crisis intervention plans targeted specifically for schools and school systems. Students should review and critique existing crisis response plans to determine effectiveness. This course should also address a school counselor director’s role in training school counselors on crisis intervention techniques. Supervision of crisis responses teams should be an integral part of this course. The application component should be for students to develop a crisis intervention and response plan for a school district and present it in a mock professional training situation.

6. The Leadership Internship course should be the application component of this program. Interns should receive on-site supervision by a school counselor director, as well as supervision from their university instructor. Interns should work with the school counselor director to develop the knowledge and skills needed to perform the responsibilities of the position. The internship course will also allocate specific attention to the seven knowledge and skills content areas previously discussed. Interns should assist in mentoring school counselors and developing relationships with educational and community stakeholders.

Conclusions, Limitations, and Recommendations for Future Research

Although school counselor directors have an essential role in K-12 education, there is a sparsity of literature about the education and training for this position. Consequently, this study attempted to contribute to the body of knowledge in school counselor leadership. Multiple national counselor associations addressed the need for supervision in their respective ethical guidelines by stating that supervisors must receive sufficient training in supervision skills, practices, and techniques (ACA, 2014; ACES, 1993; ACES, 2011; ASCA, 2004; ASCA, 2010). Additionally, ASCA has provided a rationale for school counselor directors, as well as a description of the roles and functions of this vital position (ASCA, 2013). In spite of direct and repeated statements from national organizations regarding the necessity of exemplary leadership and supervision in school counseling, as well as obligations for training if one is providing these services, national standards have not yet defined the requirements for educating and training a school counselor director.

There are several issues this researcher could address to strengthen the findings of this pilot study. There is a need to broaden the diversity of participants to expand the understanding of school counselor directors’ experiences regarding their education and training. Although the current study included school counselor directors from both public and private schools, as well as contained participants from every major geographical region in the United States, the limited number of participants hinders the generalizability of the findings on the questionnaire. Additionally, the process of implementing educator programs and enacting policy change
regarding credential requirements for school counselor directors needs additional consideration. Specifically, partnerships would develop among universities, school systems, and the governing body controlling the policy change. Although the initial implementation of the school counselor leadership program may exist as a pilot program between a single university and school system or limited group of school systems, a major criticism of this current study is the lack of state or national standards in school counselor leadership. Therefore, the ultimate goal would be to establish state or national standards for educating and training school counselor directors.

References


