

You as an Educator

“The most important thing you bring into your job is yourself....” (McAllister & Lincoln, 2004, P.20)

Practical education provides students with real-life situations to which they can apply their knowledge, and the opportunity to develop the skills necessary for graduate entry into the workforce. Workplace supervision is an integral part of this process.

For students, the quality of their practice placements and the attitudes of their workplace educators often help decide their career goals. Students regularly report that where the educator has provided positive learning opportunities, they have experienced increased confidence in their professional ability. As an educator you have an opportunity to influence a future professional and to assist them in their ongoing professional development. Your role is essential for the future of the profession.

This module explores the many roles of a workplace educator. Familiarity with the different roles involved in teaching in the workplace will provide you with opportunity to recognise the components you will undertake and develop your skills in each of these areas.

This module includes:

- Why be an educator?
- Roles of an educator
 - Instructor
 - Manager
 - Observer
 - Giver of feedback
 - Evaluator/assessor
 - Counsellor
- Sustaining the roles
- Summary
- References



Why be an educator?

There are many benefits to being an educator, as outlined in the Introduction ***Benefits of Supervising JCU students to you and your workplace***

It is beneficial for you to understand your motivation to become involved in student supervision. Your reasons for supervising students can impact on your supervision style and your effectiveness as a supervisor. The following introductory exercise may assist you with this.



Ask yourself:

- What is my motivation for supervising students?
- How would I describe myself as an educator?

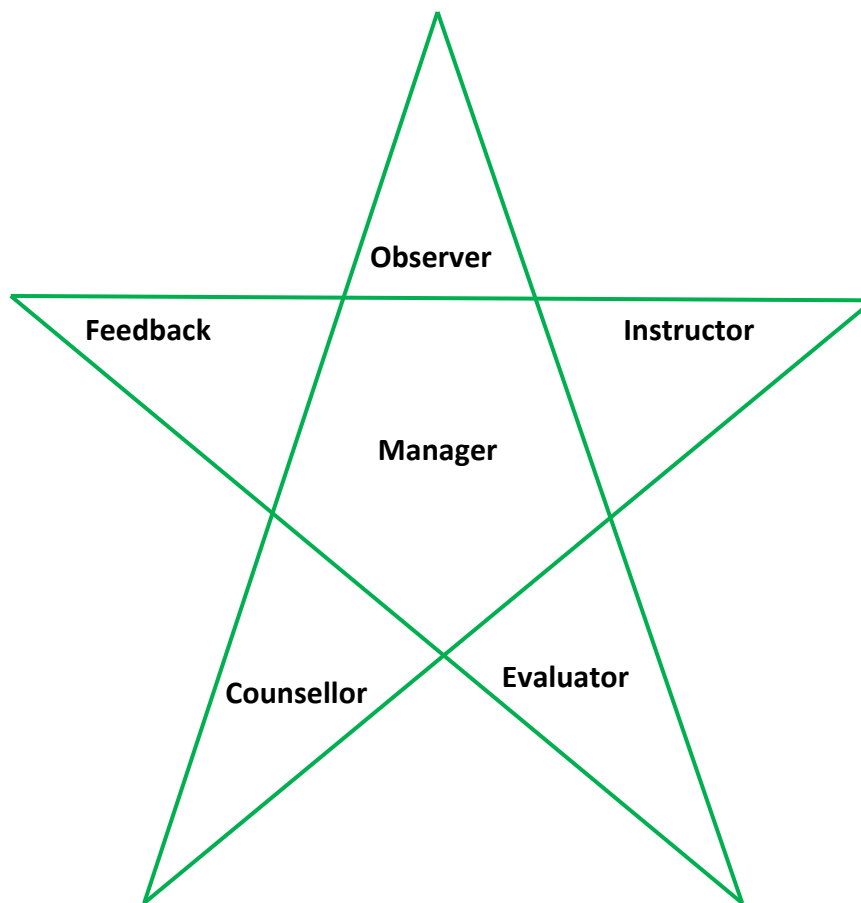
Consider the following questions and record your answers to review later.

- What qualities do you believe make an effective educator?
- What qualities would you like to develop as an educator?

Roles of an Educator

Turney et al. (1982 cited in Best & Rose 2005, p48) describes the following roles of an educator in the workplace:

- Manager
- Instructor
- Counsellor
- Observer
- Giver of feedback
- Evaluator/assessor



Roles and relationships of an educator

(Adapted from Turney et al. (1982, cited in Best, 2005, p.48))



Define what these roles mean to you in your current workplace.

What are some of the tasks associated with these roles?

How might these tasks differ when you have a student present?

Manager role

The manager role is central to all the other roles as you can see by the above diagram. Your role as a manager requires many skills but particularly the skills of planning, organisation, networking and motivating. This role will be explored in further detail in the module **Managing a Placement**.



Make a list of the tasks involved to plan and organise for a student to arrive in your workplace on placement.

Who else in your workplace needs to be consulted about having a student on placement?

Instructor role

The role of instructor is to share knowledge with the student. Be aware that there is no expectation that you *know* everything. As an instructor, you will continue to learn and develop which is one of the benefits of being a workplace educator. An important aspect of the instructor role is the identification of learning opportunities in your workplace. It is also important to consider how these opportunities can be developed over the duration of the placement.

In providing these learning opportunities you, as an instructor, may:

- demonstrate skills
- teach new skills
- model life-long learning
- apply learning styles
- give explanations
- ask and answer questions
- facilitate reasoning and reflective learning
- encourage problem solving and professional thinking
- incorporate observer/ assessor/ feedback roles

(Marriott & Galbraith, 2005)

Ways to enhance student learning, including information about different learning styles, is covered in more detail in the module **Facilitating Student Learning**.



Think about how you would respond to a student who asks you for information on something you know little or nothing about. What might you say to the student?

Identify possible learning opportunities for a student in your usual daily routine.

Identify possible learning opportunities across the duration of the placement and how they can be graded as skills improve.

Observer role

Your role as an observer is the key role in allowing you to provide feedback and evaluate or assess the student. You need to have a plan on how you will:

- purposefully observe performance regularly;
- set up opportunities to allow the student to perform;
- allow time to observe the student; and
- record observations.

(Marriott & Galbraith, 2005)

Students need to be made aware in advance for planned observation. Planned or direct observation is most effective when tasks and objectives are negotiated and defined prior to the observation session and when they are followed by feedback and reflection regarding student performance.

Incidental or indirect observation will also occur during the placement and students should be aware of this. For example, the workplace educator may note a student's interaction with other staff, may check on a student's compliance with workplace policy, may overhear a student's interaction with client when not in the same room, may regularly check documentation or report writing by the student, or may ask other staff or clients about the student's performance.

You will need to plan how you will record the student's performance during the observation to allow you to refer back to it during feedback and evaluation sessions. A notebook in your pocket to jot down notes can be a good reminder, allowing your formal record to be more accurate. Using a video camera can be very useful in certain situations to assist with student reflection of certain activities as well as a tool for evaluation of student performance. The role of evaluator is explored further in the module **Evaluating Performance**.



Consider what opportunities you will have available to observe students.

- How will you structure planned observation times or sessions?
- How will you record your observations (both planned and incidental)?



Feedback role

Your role in giving feedback is essential to allow the student to develop and get the most from their placement.

The essentials of feedback are:

- to provide timely and effective feedback to improve performance;
- to provide ongoing feedback throughout placement;
- to provide constructive feedback to remediate or reinforce; and
- to be open to receive feedback yourself.

These are explored further in the module **Optimising Feedback**.



Think of a situation where you have received negative feedback.

- Why did you perceive this feedback as negative?
- Was the feedback helpful and in what way?
- How could it have been delivered more effectively?

Evaluator/Assessor role

The assessor role can be the most challenging role for you as an educator. It is closely linked to your roles of observer and provider of feedback but can be at odds with your role as counsellor. This role is described and discussed further in the module **Evaluating Performance**.



Why should educators in the workplace be required to evaluate student performance while on placement?

Are there any aspects of your workplace that will impact on your ability to evaluate the student e.g. availability of clients/services, complex case loads, limited opportunity for observation?

Counsellor role

Although the definitions of counselling are very broad, the Macquarie dictionary defines counselling, in part, as:

- advice; opinion or instruction given in directing the judgement or conduct of another;
- interchange of opinions as to future procedure; consultation; deliberation;
- wisdom; prudence;
- deliberate purpose; plan; design;
- to give counsel to; advise;
- to urge the doing or adoption of; recommend; and
- to give counsel or advice.

(The Macquarie Dictionary, 1991)

While on placement students will encounter a myriad of experiences. Some of these may impact adversely on the student's performance. The student may or may not be aware of this impact.

While it is important to offer support and consider problem solving if appropriate, you also need to recognise your limitations in this role and contact the University for advice or assistance earlier rather than later.

It is important to maintain student confidentiality and to consider a range of options to be negotiated with the student and the university as appropriate (McGartland, 2005).



You have a student on placement. The student is distracted and unusually quiet and you have noted a drop in performance.

- Use the above definitions to plan a range of actions you could take.
- Consider the advantages and disadvantages of each in the context of your role as an educator.

Sustaining the roles

As outlined in this module, there are significant responsibilities associated with being an educator in the workplace.

While the benefits of student supervision are significant, it is also important to acknowledge the associated demands and pressures on the educator and to recognise the early warning signs of 'burnout'. These are physical and emotional exhaustion, feelings of frustration, memory problems and loss of one's sense of humour (McAllister, 2005).

Sustaining satisfaction and enjoyment of the workplace educator role is possible provided you put in place some important strategies to balance the variety of demands associated with practical education.

Strategies that will assist you to find satisfaction and meaning in your role and, as a consequence, prevent burnout include:

- recognising the opportunities for personal and professional development afforded to you by being an educator;
- practising skills needed to be a successful educator such as giving effective feedback, structuring good learning opportunities, using observation to evaluate student performance and general communication skills;
- exploring and developing self awareness; identify what is important to you in your life and in your work;
- exploring your relationship in regards 'control' – do you need to practice stepping back if you are too controlling or do you need to be more assertive in situations?;
- seeking out a professional mentor who will provide you with support, feedback and the opportunity to reflect on your own performance;
- developing skills of prioritisation and consciously choose what is important to focus on;
- taking time to develop and enjoy the relationship you establish with your student;
- acknowledging and accepting your fallibility – forgive yourself when things go wrong and be open with students when this occurs;
- gaining support from managers and colleagues – find ways to safely debrief when things become intense and ways to share the workload involved with student supervision; and

- celebrating your successes as an educator – recognise the valuable contribution you are making to your profession and to individual student development.

(Adapted from McAllister, 2005).



Consider the following questions and write a brief reflection on each.

- What are the ideas, qualities or characteristics that you value most in your life?
- How are these expressed in your various life roles (worker, educator, parent, friend etc.)?
- What is your relationship with control? Do you need to practise stepping back or do you need to be more assertive?
- What supports do you have in place in your work situation? How could you establish better support mechanisms?

Summary



Review your answers to the questions asked earlier in the first activity of this module.

- What are your motivations for supervising students?
- How would you describe yourself as a supervisor?
- What qualities do you believe make an effective educator?
- What qualities would you like to develop as an educator?

How do your answers compare with the information you now have?

This module has outlined the main roles that are associated with being a workplace educator. These are:

- Manager;
- Instructor;
- Counsellor;
- Observer;
- Giver of feedback; and
- Evaluator/assessor

Being an educator involves components from all six roles and at different times during the placement one role will become more important than another. For example, the manager role is likely to take priority during the planning and set up of a placement, while the evaluator role comes to the fore at the end of the placement.

The following list summarises aspects from all roles that contribute to being an effective workplace educator:

- Enjoying the student experience;
- Being well prepared when the student commences;
- Planning your orientation well;
- Being aware of the requirements of the placement;
- Understanding the student's learning needs;
- Having an ability to give appropriate feedback;
- Holding clear expectations;
- Promoting your profession in a positive manner;
- Putting regular time aside for students to ask questions and receive feedback;
- Allowing students to learn not just be told;
- Communicating well;
- Being able to grade challenges and expectations for students of different levels;
- Offering flexible learning environments around individual student's needs;
- Having a diversity of styles and therapeutic approaches;
- Giving students the opportunity to observe and model from a variety of practitioners;
- Demonstrating your clinical reasoning;
- Being able to articulate your own knowledge limitations;
- Being comfortable and flexible in your role;
- Understanding the roles of an Educator and the boundaries that need to be in place given potentially conflicting roles (e.g. counsellor and assessor roles);
- Holding an intuitive grasp of each situation and displaying the skills and understanding required; and
- Having insight into your own and the students learning styles.

Being a workplace educator brings many benefits; however the demands of the role on the individual need to be acknowledged and managed to ensure the role can be sustained and enjoyed over time.

The various roles of the workplace educator are explored in more depth in other modules in this package.

Managing a Placement

Facilitating Student Learning

Optimising Feedback

Evaluating Performance

References

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