

Table 4

Taming Distance in Supervised Teaching Internships Using Digital

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Supervision, distance, presence, digital, internship

Summary

In teacher education programs, internships in remote areas or internationally are often without direct supervision. In education, the growing use of various technological tools (synchronous or asynchronous video, web conferencing, discussion forum, blog, digital portfolio, etc.) favors a multidimensional approach (Pellerin, 2010) that can be used to benefit trainees' professional development. However, some limitations of distance or online training - including isolation of the learner (Poellhuber, Racette, Fortin and Ferland, 2013) - must be investigated. Considering the range of uses of digital devices for online supervision, we seek to better understand how educational training programs can lead to innovation in this regard.

Based on interviews with supervisors about their practices for distance supervision (in order to be « present online » for their trainees), we propose a portrait of the current situation in several french-speaking canadian universities. Other interviews were also conducted with teachers who host these trainees in schools where supervisors will not go for a face-to-face visit and evaluation. In addition, we measure trainees' perceptions of the presence of their supervisor - as well as their peers who are doing their internship elsewhere - during distance or international internships using a questionnaire adapted from the Community of Inquiry model (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000).

This theoretical model of Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000) distinguishes three types of presence. The teaching presence refers to the methods used to create rewarding and stimulating distance learning experiences. The cognitive presence refers to the opportunities offered in order to make sense of different knowledge or situation, through exchanges within groups. As for the social presence, it corresponds to the possibilities that students have to communicate their personal characteristics and to present themselves as real people, despite the distance.

Like Hamel (2012), our results allow us to identify various changes in the roles of the internship supervisor (Gervais and Desrosiers, 2005) when supervision is done online. Following the analysis of our questionnaire on the presence perceived by the trainees, the responses of a hundred respondents testify that current practices can tame distance, and that certain types of presence manifest themselves more than others. Our results also highlight new issues that need to be addressed in order to reduce the isolation of remotely supervised trainees, including collaboration with school stakeholders that also needs to be reconsidered with uses of new online devices. This knowledge will be useful for teacher education programs with a view to improve their practical training through a thoughtful use of digital.

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