Effective Practices for the Supervision of Instructors

Sponsored by:
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PURPOSE: To summarize research that describes the current state of instructional supervision in Special Operations Forces (SOF) initial acquisition training (IAT) language schools and provides recommendations which can be used to maintain and further develop effective instructional supervisory behaviors and practices.

RESULTS: Although the quality of instructional supervision at SOF IAT language schools is comparable to that of other language programs, there is room for improvement. Findings include best practices in instructional supervision described in the literature as well as information on the current state of instructional supervision at SOF IAT language schools. Recommendations to maintain and further develop effective instructional supervision are provided for SOF leadership, command language program managers (CLPMs), and instructional supervisors.

APPLICATION: The findings and recommendations discussed in this summary and the full report can be used to improve instructional supervision at government language schools. These improvements could increase instructor effectiveness and help develop language-capable personnel.

Introduction

This document highlights findings and recommendations from the *Establish Best Practices for the Supervision of Instructors* Technical Report, which compares the instructional supervisory behaviors and practices used in Special Operations Forces (SOF) Initial Acquisition Training (IAT) schools to best practices described in the literature, as well as to practices used in language schools external to the SOF IAT community. Based on the findings, the report provides recommendations for SOF leadership, command language program managers (CLPMs), and instructional supervisors (supervisors). These recommendations can be used to maintain and further develop effective instructional supervisory behaviors and practices in SOF IAT language schools.
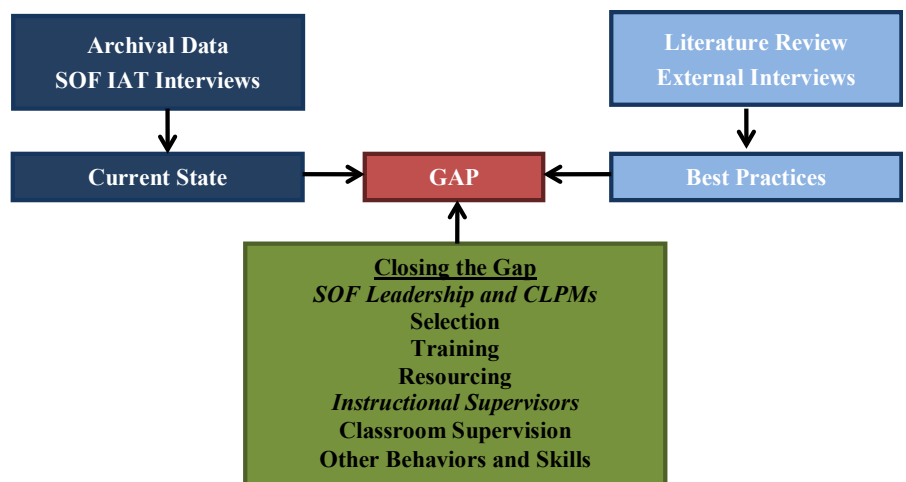
Method

Theoretical, empirical, and best practices literature in the fields of education, psychology, second language acquisition, and training was reviewed to identify effective instructional supervisory behaviors and skills. Following the literature review, both SOF IAT current-state and external benchmarking studies were conducted to identify instructional supervisory behaviors and practices currently used in SOF IAT language schools and in external language schools. The information collected was used to identify gaps between the current and desired states of instructional supervision in SOF IAT language schools and provide SOF leadership, CLPMs, and supervisors with recommendations for closing these gaps.

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Caveats

The reader is encouraged to consider a few important caveats regarding these findings:

- Much of the literature on this topic is theoretical and focuses on supervision in K-12 instructional contexts and may not be applicable to adult, military-related instructional contexts, such as SOF IAT language schools.

- Participants in the current state study included current SOF IAT language program vendors. Any changes in language program vendors could change the reported instructional supervisory behaviors and practices.

- Not all the SOF IAT language program administrators, current language program vendors, and external language schools contacted were able to participate in the interviews. Thus, the findings presented in this report may be subject to change if additional interviews are conducted.

Findings

Findings are provided from effective practices identified in the literature review, as well as the current state and benchmarking studies. For a more detailed discussion of the findings, see the *Establish Best Practices for Supervision of Instructors* Technical Report.

Main findings from the literature review focused on the position of supervisors, specifically their responsibilities, behaviors, qualifications, and skills.

Main findings from the SOF IAT current-state study and the external benchmarking study show that while instructional supervision at SOF IAT language schools is similar to that at external language schools, there are some differences. Findings are discussed here in terms of the position of supervisors, relationships between supervisors and instructors, strategies and methods for instructional supervision, and classroom observations and assessments.

Findings from the Literature

Administrative Responsibilities		Classroom Responsibilities	
• Staffing	• Reporting	• Classroom Observations	• Performance Evaluations
• Scheduling/Planning	• Applying Policies	• Providing Feedback	
• Budgeting			

Qualifications		Other Behaviors and Skills	
• Master's or Doctoral Degree in Second Language Acquisition, Instruction, or Education	• Instructional, Administrative, and Military Experience	• Professional Development	• Open and Honest Communication
	• English Proficiency	• Coaching/Mentoring	• Effective Communication Skills
		• Group Process Skills	

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Findings from the SOF IAT Current State and External Benchmarking Studies

Position of Instructional Supervisor	Relationships between Instructional Supervisors and Instructors
• Supervisors' responsibilities differ within SOF IAT schools and between SOF IAT and external schools. • Qualifications include cultural expertise, English proficiency, instructional experience, and administrative experience.	• Each SOF IAT school has between 1 to 5 supervisors and between 5 to 35 instructors per supervisor. • Challenges supervisors have when working with instructors include instructors' lack of cooperation, lack of cultural understanding, and inexperience in education and teaching.

Strategies and Methods for Instructional Supervision	Classroom Observations and Assessments
• Supervisors engage in professional development and provide these opportunities to instructors. • Supervisors recommend communicative, task-based, and learner-centered models for instruction. • Supervisors in SOF IAT language schools play larger roles in instructor motivation than supervisors in external schools.	• While all language schools report that supervisors are responsible for observation, evaluation, and feedback, practices differ within SOF IAT schools and between SOF IAT and external schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the SOF IAT current state and external benchmarking studies, recommendations for Selection, Training, and Resourcing are provided to SOF IAT leadership and CLPMs to maintain and further develop effective instructional supervisory behaviors and practices in SOF IAT language schools.

Recommendations are also provided to current supervisors on the topics of Observation, Evaluation, and Feedback, Cultural Understanding, and Interpersonal Communication. These recommendations can help them to maintain and further develop their effectiveness.

Finally, research recommendations are provided to advance the theoretical, empirical, and effective practices literature on instructional supervision in adult, military-related instructional contexts, such as SOF IAT language schools.

Recommendations for SOF IAT Leadership and CLPMs

Selection	Training	Resourcing
• Hire or promote qualified supervisors based on education, instructional experience, administrative experience, and English proficiency.	• Create an on-the-job training program for supervisors, focusing on interpersonal communication and administrative skills and the SOF IAT instructional context, among other KSAs.	• Provide necessary resources for supervisory effectiveness, including support staff and resources to support supervisors' and instructors' professional development.

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Recommendations for Instructional Supervisors

Observation, Evaluation, and Feedback	Cultural Understanding	Interpersonal Communication
• Gain instructor buy-in through pre-observation conferences, frequent evaluations, and constructive feedback. • Use data-driven Instructor Feedback Reports and the Instructor Developmental Feedback Guide developed by ALPS Solutions to provide instructors with multi-source feedback.	• Learn about instructors' cultures through research and asking questions. • Learn greetings and commonly used phrases in instructors' language to build rapport.	• Communicate openly and honestly with instructors. • Obtain all the facts before making judgments.

Recommendations for Further Research

Task and KSA Analysis	Additional Research
• Task and knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) analyses should be conducted in each SOF IAT language school to better understand the tasks supervisors perform and to identify the KSAs required for them to be effective.	• Additional research should be conducted to better understand how effective instructional supervision in SOF IAT language schools is related to instructor effectiveness and student learning outcomes, such as language proficiency.

Conclusion

Although supervisors in SOF IAT language schools currently engage in many best practices for effective instructional supervision, SOF leadership, CLPMs, and supervisors can use the recommendations provided to close the gaps between the current and desired states of instructional supervision in SOF IAT language schools. In doing so, supervisors can, and will continue to, play important roles in increasing instructor effectiveness, thereby helping to develop language-capable SOF personnel through SOF IAT.