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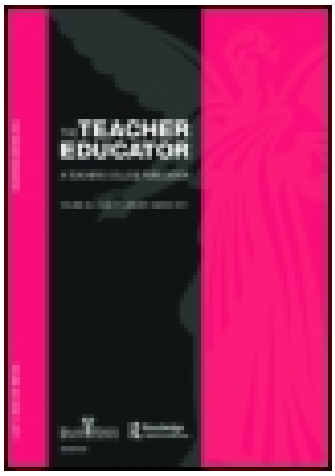

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CONNECTING UNIVERSITY SUPERVISION AND CRITICAL REFLECTION: MENTORING AND MODELING

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CONNECTING UNIVERSITY SUPERVISION AND CRITICAL REFLECTION: MENTORING AND MODELING

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This study reports on the experiences of supervisors in a university teacher preparation program regarding their critical reflection on their practice. This has an impact on the learning opportunities available for their student teachers. Findings include: (a) an understanding of critical reflection is something that builds over time for student teachers through exposure to their supervisor's practice; (b) explicitly modeling, guiding, and communicating the importance of critical reflection in teaching practice through supervisory stance helps teacher candidates develop critically reflective practices and understandings; (c) developing critical reflection in their individual and shared practices takes time for both parties.

Preparing teachers for their future careers requires quality teacher education that provides teacher candidates with effective classroom and field experiences. High-quality mentoring and supervision is a necessary component of the student teaching experience. Providing student teachers with access to more knowledgeable others, such as university supervisors, can structure a strong support system that encourages and reflects on effective teacher education practices. Supervisors are in a unique position to foster those practices in students through both explicit instruction and through modeling. One such practice that is heavily advocated in the teacher education literature is the ability to

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engage in critical reflection on one's experiences and responsibilities as a teacher.

Since the 1980s, teacher education programs throughout the United States have used various approaches to promote and foster critical reflection in prospective teachers. Most programs include reflection or critical reflection in their mission statements, course descriptions, and program overviews, but there is a lack of sharp definition of what that means in reality (Hatton & Smith, 1994). Practices include journals, discussion, personal histories, philosophical essays, action research, reflective writings, and many other methods. Some argued that these common ways to achieve critical reflection are inadequate or ineffective and that teacher education programs might benefit more from the use of portfolios, case studies, study teams, peer coaching, or expert mentoring (Ferraro, 2000; Walkington, Christensen, & Kock, 2001). These authors do agree on the need for systematic and regular reflective practices and the importance of providing preservice teachers with significant opportunities to work, learn, and reflect in real situations (see also Loughran, 2002).

If there is to be an emphasis on the opportunities to reflect in and on real-life situations, then it is necessary to consider how this work might best be accomplished during student teaching and field experiences. One person with the potential to support this work is the university supervisor. Supervision research contributed to a better understanding of the logistical challenges that universities face in funding and supporting the supervision role as well as the relationships between the various participants in student teaching including student teachers, classroom teachers, and the supervisors (Hoover, O'Shea, & Carroll, 1988; Richardson-Koehler, 1988; Zahorik, 1988).

Additional research on supervision focused on the issues of student teachers' attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach during supervisory experiences. In general, the university supervisor was found to have little influence on the belief changes in student teachers (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Howey, 1994). However, there are others who suggested that supervisors are relevant and important to the experiences of student teachers (Ferguson & Brink, 2004; Friebus, 1977; Yusko, 2004; Zimpher, DeVoss, & Nott, 1980). Friebus (1977) found that the university supervisor was viewed as equally or more important than the classroom teacher in areas like coaching the student teacher or encouraging the student teacher in legitimate ways (as cited in Zimpher et al., 1980). Zimpher et al. determined that supervisors provided another lens or set of eyes to support the student teacher in standing on her own practice rather than mimicking the classroom teacher without thought or understanding. Further, the supervisor was able to provide the necessary critique in

feedback that allowed the student teacher to reflect on her practice and develop as a teacher (Schulz, 2005). However, little research has been conducted on how university supervisors engage students in reflection, especially critical reflection.

In addition, supervisors have attitudes, beliefs, and understandings of their own about what it means to learn and to teach and these beliefs directly influence their practice with teacher candidates. We use the term *stance* in this research, defined as a supervisor's beliefs about how a student teacher learns to teach. Briefly, this includes an understanding of the factors that lead a supervisor to engage and interact with student teachers as learners for particular reasons, for example, what effective learning looks like, the purposes of student teaching as a learning experience, the role of mentors in this process (for a further discussion of types of supervisor stances, see Bates, Drits, & Ramirez, 2007). There has been some theorizing on the supervisory practices used by those who mentor practicing teachers (e.g., Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 1995), but little of this addresses the particular experiences and learning needs of those working with preservice teachers. Attention to supervisors' stance and their beliefs about critical reflection will have a clear impact on a student teacher's learning opportunities and can result in substantive improvements to the process and experience of student teaching. This stance can also greatly impact the way preservice teachers think about the profession and ultimately engage in their work.

Although this reviewed research helps to show the potential of supervision as a valuable component of student teaching, a need exists to explore how supervisors conceptualize their stances and how this affects the ways they participate in and foster critically reflective practice in students. We lack the knowledge of how individual supervisors create spaces in which preservice teachers feel safe and are able to engage in questioning and problem solving. We are left to wonder about the complexity of supervisory stances and how particular stances facilitate critical reflection in students, providing them with the necessary tools for today's unpredictable, dynamic classrooms.

Research and Thinking on Critical Reflection

Although there has been little research in the area of supervision in the past two decades, a voluminous literature has developed with regard to critical reflection and critical thinking. However, clear and rigorous definitions of critical reflection are scarce and are often criticized as inadequate, vague, or overly general (Fisher, 2003). One of the most simplistic conceptions of critical reflection is in contrast to technical

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rational or practical types of reflection, which are concerned primarily with ''means to accomplish unexamined ends'' (Dinkelman, 1998, p. 5). Critical reflection, then, requires an examination of ''ends'' and a deliberation of the moral and ethical dimensions of education to allow teachers to see the connections between what they do in the classroom and the broader social and political contexts surrounding their work in schools.

Other educational researchers and theorists define critical reflection in terms of critical consciousness and self-examination. For example, Zeichner and Liston (1996) challenged teachers to consciously articulate the ''tacit knowledge that we do not often express so that we can criticize, examine, and improve'' (p. 15) practice. Larrivee (2000) argued, ''any path a teacher chooses must involve a willingness to be an active participant in a perpetual growth process requiring ongoing critical reflection'' (p. 306). This process begins with examination of oneself and one's practice, which generally progresses to a stage in which fear, doubt, and inner turmoil abound. However, without critical reflection and engagement in this struggle for self-awareness, teachers can ''remain trapped'' and unable to change their own situation or that of their students (Larrivee, 2000, p. 293). Thus, the goal in these definitions of critical reflection is change or transformation. For the purposes of this study, this is the selected focus/definition for critical reflection in the practices and stances of our student teachers and supervisors.

As the research and literature on critical reflective thinking and practice have increased in the past two decades, more and more educators have come to believe that it is an integral component of education. Rodriguez, Sjostrom, and Alvarez (1998) provided a concise summation of the current position of most teacher educators and educational researchers when they claimed that an educational activity is successful to the extent that it encourages people to think critically. In an effort to realize this conviction, colleges and universities that prepare teachers have sought ways to promote critical reflection in mission statements, program structures, courses, and fieldwork. The body of literature outlining the myriad approaches to critical reflection in practice is too vast for the current discussion.

Despite the proliferation of research in this area, very little is understood of how critical reflection in preservice teachers is fostered, especially by university supervisors and mentors. Progress is being slowly made through the systematic study and examination of the experiences teacher educators and preservice teachers have in programs that seek to promote critical reflection. The present study aims to address three university supervisors and how their own stances toward supervision

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influence the critically reflective practices of the preservice teachers with whom they work. Additionally, we will focus attention on how a supervisor's own critical reflection can further contribute to the effective preparation of her preservice teachers. Each of the supervisors in this study was asked to articulate her stance toward supervision. Although a seemingly straightforward question, each struggled to define her stance in concrete terms. As we then watched the supervisors in practice, we searched for evidence of that implied stance in their conversations and actions. Through data analysis, we have seen the supervisors' willingness and ability to critically reflect on their own practice and the central role this has played in their practice. This work has important implications for student teacher supervisors, especially those who have not engaged, either individually or collaboratively, in critically examining, analyzing, and reflecting on their teacher preparation programs' philosophies and practices.

Research Objectives and Methodology

This study addresses the role of critical reflection in three supervisors' stances, and the impact these stances have on the student teachers' process of learning to teach, specifically in their understanding and adoption of critical reflection in their own burgeoning practice. The research was designed as a collective case study (Stake, 2006) involving data collected from 3 supervisors and 12 teacher education students. The individual cases were developed, compared, and contrasted to explore the way supervisors approach their work and the perceptions of their students, individually and collectively. Case studies were chosen for the detailed investigation they allow and for the contributions of such investigation in both educational theory and practice (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003).

Documentation of the interactions and conversations between supervisors and student teachers along with participant interviews allowed for exploration of the role of critical reflection in the process of supervision and of learning to teach. The goals of the study were to examine (a) the role critical reflection plays in how a supervisor comes to know her own stance, (b) how critical reflection is expressed in the enactment of the supervisors' stances, and (c) the degree to which student teachers understand their supervisors' ideas about critical reflection. An underlying assumption in this study is that a greater understanding of supervisors' stances and beliefs about critical reflection will aid in creating a synergy between the goals and mission of teacher education programs and the goals, attitudes, and interests of university supervisors.

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Participant Selection

Participants were purposefully selected to provide information-rich cases and intensive study of the issues central to this research. Although a small sample, the participants were chosen for maximum variation, a strategy that aims to capture and describe themes that span individual participants and that allows us the greatest opportunity for learning (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2005). This investigation focused on three university elementary supervisors, all clinical faculty at the same university teaching in the same teacher preparation program. Each taught the same courses and provided field supervision, but to distinct cohorts of 20–25 students placed at schools in different public school districts. Each also provided mentoring to both the student teachers and school site teacher educators (STEs).

In addition to the 3 supervisors, 12 student teachers participated in the study. All students in the three cohorts were given the opportunity to participate. Of those who expressed a willingness and ability to participate, four from each cohort of students were purposefully selected using criterion selection and maximum variation selection techniques (Patton, 2002). Participants were chosen who completed their field placements in four different contexts (two schools and two grade levels) from within each supervisor's district. Other criteria included demographic information such as age, gender, and ethnicity; however, the overall sample varied little in these criteria. The final participants were chosen in an effort to represent the larger population of student teachers and to demonstrate the greatest diversity of experience (Patton; Polkinghorne, 2005).

Participants

Jean

As a second-year supervisor, Jean had the least supervision experience of the three and had moved to the state from a different region of the country. Her experience included many years as an elementary classroom teacher and, later, a district literacy specialist, both of which afforded her opportunities to work with student teachers in a mentorship and coaching capacity. The four schools in the district with which she worked were suburban and homogeneous.

LeeAnne

LeeAnne's background in teaching and supervision was extensive. She was in her eighth year as a university supervisor, had taught elementary school for 20 years, having served many of those years as an STE,

and had opened her classroom to university research studies. LeeAnne received her master's from the study university in the late 1990s. Her classroom teaching experience was in the same district in which she supervised, so she had familiarity with district policy and expectations. The four elementary schools in which she supervised were in suburban settings and had somewhat diverse populations, with increasing immigrant communities. Each of these schools had full inclusion policies.

Andrea

Andrea was a 14-year veteran of university supervision, and, as such, had the longest relationships with the various districts the university worked with, and served as an informal mentor for the other supervisors. She received her master's from the university prior to beginning her supervision career, and before this, had taught in an elementary classroom in the same district in which she supervised. Each of her four schools where she supervised were highly diverse and urban, and each faced serious challenges in meeting the learning and social needs of its student populations.

The 12 student teacher participants were typical representatives of the university's elementary teacher candidates. Half had attended community college before enrolling at the university, two were male, two were from out of state, and most were in their mid to late 20s. All of the students were Caucasian, as were all of their supervisors. Three of the students, two females and one male, were of a nontraditional age, having had previous careers in some aspect of childcare. Most of the students, however, were undertaking elementary school teaching as their first career and the accompanying questioning, anxiety, and enthusiasm of entering the workforce for the first time.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study design focuses on the development of cases based on the verbal and written interactions between each supervisor and her student teachers. These cases provide an in-depth look into the role critical reflection plays in supervisors' stances, and into the day-to-day enactment of stance and students' perception and responses to the stances.

In this yearlong study, data were collected over two semesters—fall and spring. In the fall semesters, supervisors and student teachers interacted in courses at the university and in field placement school sites. During spring semester, supervisors worked with these teachers primarily in their 13-week student teaching experience as well as in a

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weekly university seminar course. Data collected during this yearlong investigation includes observations, interviews, and artifacts.

Observations

Beginning in fall semester and continuing throughout spring semester, each supervisor would observe student teachers regularly and conduct post-observation conferences where they would debrief the experience. During these, the supervisor would share notes taken during the observation, ask questions of the student teacher, and collaboratively reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson. A member of the research team observed, audiotaped, and collected field notes of these conferences. Between two and four conferences were observed during spring semester depending on scheduling and length of conference (e.g., LeeAnne conducted fewer, but longer, observations). The researcher was a non-participant in these observations and conferences, refraining from engaging in the conversation and concentrating solely on collecting the data for later analysis (Spradley, 1979).

Interviews

Each supervisor and student teacher was interviewed twice during the school year. Supervisors were interviewed first as to gather information about their stance, which then informed the interview questions for the student teachers. All interviews were semi-structured—that is, pre-established questions were consistent from interview to interview in sequence and wording, yet participants were allowed the time and freedom to fully develop their responses, share their experiences and stories, or ask questions of the interviewer if necessary (Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The first set of interviews was conducted at the end of the fall semester, in order to give supervisors an opportunity and time to get to know their student teachers and vice versa. In those interviews, supervisors were asked to provide data from students about their hopes and expectations for the student teaching semester as well as initial impressions of the role and purpose of the supervisor in helping them learn to teach. Students were asked about these same topics, as well as their perceptions of their supervisors' beliefs about teaching. The second set of interviews were conducted at the conclusion of student teaching in spring in order to look for (a) consistency in each supervisor's ideas about her role, stance, and interactions with her students and (b)

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changes and/or consistencies in the student teachers' understandings about the role, purpose, and beliefs of their supervisors.

Artifacts

Artifacts from each supervisor were collected that documented the daily aspects of her practice. These artifacts included weekly seminar agendas, lesson plans collected during observations, observation notes, weekly goal sheets, relevant e-mails, syllabi for courses supervisors teach to student teachers, and formative and summative evaluations. Artifacts provided another data source to triangulate the evidence provided by the debriefing conferences and interviews, strengthening the research and increasing the accuracy of interpretation (Morrow & Smith, 2000; Stake, 2005). This also enabled the researchers to achieve a more rounded, complete understanding of the array of interactions between supervisors and student teachers.

Analysis

Each case study, which consisted of one supervisor and her four student teachers, was analyzed separately. The number of participants allowed for a rich set of case studies across contexts and grade levels (Yin, 2003). Broad categories that focused on initial patterns and perceptions of critical issues in the interview transcripts were identified in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These categories were refined and each case was individually revisited in light of these changes. For each case, we engaged in a cyclical process of analyzing the data, ''refining and modifying the data at multiple levels of complexity in order to locate the main essence or meaning'' (Stake, 2005, p. 389). Memos on each supervisor were developed, overlap between the ideas reflected in each case was carefully assessed, and themes were further refined. Student teaching interviews and artifacts from the debriefing conferences provided data to triangulate the supervisors' perceptions of the experiences they had with their students and the role of critical reflection in these experiences. Following the analysis of each case, cross-case analysis was conducted to identify broader themes and issues of critically reflective supervision practice that exist across the experiences of the various participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 2006). Individual cases alone may not advance the field in substantive ways. However, analysis of each in context, followed by analysis of cases collectively, can lead to an increased understanding of and capacity for theorizing about the larger field of teacher education (Stake, 2005).

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Findings: The Presence of Critical Reflection in Supervisors' Practices

The three cases to be described here all demonstrate the importance of critical reflection as a component of the supervisor's stance towards her practice and as an element of the expectations held for preservice teachers as a part of their development. A number of practices are considered relevant for the development of critical reflection in the field of supervision, including discussion/dialogue; systematic, explicit opportunities for critical reflection in context; modeling; and relationship building. In particular, there are three findings for this research that illustrate this influence on both parties and the presence of these critical elements in the relationship: (a) an understanding of critical reflection is something that builds over time for student teachers through exposure to their supervisor's practice; (b) explicitly modeling, guiding, and communicating the importance of critical reflection in teaching practice through supervisory stance helps teacher candidates develop critically reflective practices and understandings; (c) developing critical reflection in their individual and shared practices takes time for both parties. The following sections detail each of these findings.

Finding One: Understanding the Role of Reflection in Teaching

The development of an understanding about the role of and need for critical reflection as a tool of teaching practice was a year-long endeavor for the student teachers. Students do not perceive this as key to their practice early on but are very conscious of it by the end of the year as something that has the potential to help them develop into competent professionals. It is evident that they needed continued support and encouragement to understand and begin independently implementing the practice of reflection. With each supervisor's students, it seemed that this was explicitly expected of them in courses (through activities like suggestion circles) and in their field practicum (in conferences, etc.). By the end of the year, the following comment was typical of the student teachers as they described their role during the debriefing conferences after observations, ''My role was to reflect on what I was doing and to give my honest opinion about what I thought about myself'' (Chelsea, spring interview, p. 4).

For many teacher candidates, critical reflection does not seem to be a naturally occurring trait or tendency; it needs to be introduced, fostered, reinforced, guided, and so on until the students begin to take responsibility for their reflections themselves and the supervisors slowly

progress to more a listener and less a questioner. The development of critical reflection takes time because it is a continual process, one that is nonlinear and requires both time and development (see, e.g., Rust, 1988). Jean recognized that this was a process, not something that was a quick skill to learn, as she described her reflection on a student's work late in the spring semester:

> [I was] just reading a reflection and I think it was the first time that she [the student] really bought into the idea of reflection. Because they think that the whole motto ''what is it that a teacher is reflective ... blah blah blah.'' But they don't get it yet. And it takes them a long time to get it. This is the last paper she turned in to me. She viewed a video of herself. She said ''I was seeing some things,'' she had been told, but yet they didn't register as being anything. So it was a powerful experience for her. So I think we still push them through the experiences of reflection. Obviously we have to, that's what teachers do and that's what we need to get them to see that cycle, but it's amazing how even after all of this, they're just all at various stages. It will probably be several years in their teaching until they really see it as a tool that they need. (spring interview, p. 2)

Over time, all four of LeeAnne's students commented on how their initial frustration with being forced to reflect eventually led to both an understanding of and appreciation for reflection. They all saw eventually how it was in their best interest and how it would benefit them in their future professional development. In reflecting on the changes across the year, Taylor acknowledged her eventual realization that the work with LeeAnne in the debriefing conferences was a process of coming to know the value of reflection:

> I was expecting her to tell me, ''I saw this and this is really great, and I saw this ... but you might want to work on this.'' But with these conferences and having me analyze everything.... That was the only thing I was a little disappointed about was that I wasn't getting as much feedback from her. But looking back on it now I can see how much better it is for me to analyze myself. Because that's what I'm gonna have to do as a professional teacher. I can't have a supervisor there telling me what to do all the time. (spring interview, p. 5)

Like Taylor, Alex recognized that he needed guidance in reflecting and that it is a developmental process,

> I like being told specific stuff, but it's also good to help me reflect on my own work because I'm not gonna have Jean anymore, so it's good to be

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> able to reflect on my own things. So, they were good guided questions. (spring interview, p. 2)

Critical reflection is a highly affective endeavor and must be embarked on in a conducive environment to avoid hindering the process or merely reinforcing previously held conceptions about issues at hand. As James (2004) aptly contended, ''We must give ourselves and others permission to engage/indulge in meaningful exchanges, struggles and learning which, though uncomfortable at times, constitute a legitimate academic pursuit'' (p. 20). Although LeeAnne's students found this to be a sometimes uncomfortable practice, they eventually began to understand what was expected of them and responded accordingly because of her consistency with her expectations and her willingness to support them as they engaged in this new practice. As LeeAnne described in the fall interview,

> . . . they'll talk about their knowledge, you know, what knowledge did they gain this week? And why was that important, and how did they get it, and what will it mean to them as a teacher. And what skills have they gained, and why was that important, and what are some personal dispositions that they've developed and why was that important. And what does that mean for them as a teacher. So, it has to go beyond that: I had a good week and I taught a good lesson. But it's really, How do you know it was good? What does this mean for you as a teacher? If it was challenging, what are you going to do to change it? Why would you want to change it? . . . Plus they do a lot of discussion with their peers about, ''What's worked? Why do I think it worked? Why didn't it work?'' So I have them do a variety of levels of reflection. And some of them hate it. I mean, they do. . . . And, you know, we keep trying to say, ''This is what good teachers do. This is how we become lifelong learners because we reflect and grow and improve our practice.'' They hate it. You know. Don't ask me to reflect again! (fall interview, p. 10)

Taylor described how this experience developed over time; as she described what happened in the typical debriefing conference with LeeAnne, she recognized her own growth:

> Before LeeAnne even said anything, I would explain what I thought went well, why it went well, what could be improved, did anything go wrong, why did it go wrong. You know, just analyzing myself. (spring interview, p. 5)

Being able to see when, how, and why reflection influenced their practice helps student teachers understand why it's worth continuing in

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the future when no one requires it from them. Having supervisors that understand this process and work with it is key. The following finding looks more closely at this issue.

Finding Two: Modeling Critical Reflection and Guiding Student Teachers Through Reflective Discussion

University supervisors are in the unique position of having extensive access to student teachers in order to serve as potential role models and sounding boards for turning university theory into classroom teaching practices. Supervisors are watched closely by student teachers for attitudes about teaching and learning. When supervisors demonstrate a reflective awareness of their own beliefs about teaching and learning, they support student teachers in thinking through their own beliefs while engaging in conversation and reflection together in the field. It is critical that supervisors take advantage of this opportunity to demonstrate the power and importance of understanding one's own beliefs about teaching. Supervisors' stances inform not only instructional and curricular choices; they also color the conversations and interactions with prospective teachers, cooperating teachers, principals, and colleagues. For student teachers to understand what is expected of them as critically reflective teachers, it is helpful to see models of those who are critically reflective. Although each supervisor had a different stance toward her practice and highlighted various elements as key to how she engaged in her role, all three clearly demonstrated the importance of critical reflection. This section looks closely at the role of discussion and modeling as significant ways that supervisors can support critical reflection in their student teachers.

Discussion

One method of fostering critically reflective thinking in preservice teachers that has received a lot of attention in the literature recently is discussion or collaboration, which is believed to have potentially transformative effects. Dillon (1994), for example, described discussion as a group interaction where members join together to address a question of common concern, examining various views, enhancing knowledge or understanding, forming an answer, judgment, decision, resolution, or action. Our supervisors used the debriefing conferences that they held with student teachers after observing in their classrooms as a place where they could engage students in reflective conversation. As LeeAnne described:

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> The purpose of the conference is to get the students to, I think, to be reflective about their practice. To talk about what worked and what didn't and why they made the choices they did and how did they know the students were learning, and all that. It's for them to just really process what's going on and then to also do some problem solving, if they had some issues, to talk about what those issues were and what we could do differently in the future. (spring interview, p. 5)

Whipp (2003) concluded that discussions and dialogues must be carefully structured to go beyond generalities toward higher levels of reflection. She urged teacher educators to explicitly express the goals, purposes, and importance of critically reflective discussions to students. Amanda describes the process that Andrea engaged her in to help her reflect on her practice:

> Researcher: How did Andrea engage you in reflection?
>
> Amanda: Just conversation wise. That was probably the hugest part of reflection. But also different assignments she gave definitely caused you to reflect. And throughout her instruction, I think she's pretty reflective as well. And kind of like that was drilled in quite a bit, so it kind of just makes you just naturally become that. You don't have to think as hard, ''Oh, gotta sit down and reflect.'' I think that is important to do that, but it becomes more natural for you to quickly say, ''Okay, this went well, this didn't, this is what I need to fix.''
>
> Researcher: So what do you think Andrea believes about reflection in the process of learning to teach?
>
> Amanda: That it's key. That it's how you learn as a teacher and become better and just um . . . really take your teaching to a higher, more thoughtful level in all elements, be it engagement, content, overall management, every little thing, reflection is the key part to all of those pieces coming together. (spring interview, p. 2)

Likewise, Mezirow (1997) challenged teacher educators to help learners become aware of their own and others' assumptions through discourse, which he believed is ''necessary to validate what and how one understands'' (p. 10). Molly understood this process of coming to know herself better through reflection and conversation with LeeAnne:

> At first it was frustrating that she wanted me to reflect on what I did and tell her that, because it was like, ''This is your turn to tell me.'' But then it was really helpful for her to see my perspective on how the lesson went and what I thought went well and what didn't go so well. So that she would be able to either support or say, ''Ah . . . I disagree with you.'' It

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> seemed really helpful to me. I think I really got a greater understanding of ... my teaching and teaching style and all of that. (spring interview, p. 5)

Mezirow proposed that education that fosters critical reflection is ''learner-centered, participatory, and interactive and it involves group deliberation and group problem solving'' (p. 10). Similarly, Walkington et al. (2001) argued that reflection in solitude does not offer the multiple perspectives, viewpoints, conceptions, and so on of shared reflection. Kelly realized that her experiences in reflective discussion with Jean facilitated her understanding, ''She tries to guide you to get to that point to be able to reflect deeply about how your lessons went, all the aspects of it. She does talk, but it's a very mutual conversation'' (fall interview, p. 2).

Modeling

Dinkelman (1998) suggested that modeling can be a powerful method of promoting critically reflective thinking in preservice teachers. Chelsea clearly felt that she saw LeeAnne engaging in the work of helping her while also modeling her own reflective work:

> Chelsea: Just asking me questions about how I felt about it. And she always, they were always deeper questions, not just like yes or no questions. It always made me look back and think hard about what I was doing.
>
> Researcher: What do you think LeeAnne believes about the role of reflection in learning to teach?
>
> Chelsea: I think that she's ... believes very strongly in reflection. She always had us reflecting on everything. Yeah, she reflects on her own things, I think, from what I can tell. She seems to reflect on what she's doing as well.
>
> Researcher: Did she talk about it? Or did she just kind of expect it of you and guide you through the process?
>
> Chelsea: No, she would talk about it and how important it was that we were always reflecting on our practice. (spring interview, p. 2)

Dinkelman's case study showed evidence that a ''unilateral attempt to promote critical thinking'' through modeling met with some success (p. 41). The work of the three supervisors in our study would suggest further confirming evidence towards the power of modeling. All three supervisors had teacher candidates who understood this to be something that their supervisor valued and practiced as a part of their professional work in teacher education. Kelly described her understanding of Jean's commitment to, and modeling of, reflective practice:

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> Researcher: So what do you think her belief is about the role of reflection in learning to teach?
>
> Kelly: Oh man! Jean is like the reflect queen, I'd say. She thinks it's like right at the foundation of it. You have to do it. It's a huge role and I think that's why I've learned so much because she just asks us to reflect on everything over and over and over, but it really, it truly helps. And I'm a very goal-driven person and so that totally works for me. I have to sit down and think, ''How did it go?'' ''How did I do?'' ''What do I need to do different?'' to reach my ultimate goal, so, and I probably learned it from her.
>
> Researcher: Do you think. . . . You know you have this impression of her commitment to reflection. . . . Is that based on how she acts with you? Or things she has explicitly said?
>
> Kelly: Both. I mean, like in class, it's just constant, ''Turn, talk to your neighbor, reflect.'' Then, with her, it's, ''Well, let's reflect on what you said a little more.'' It's not just, ''Alright, she said that, let's move on.'' She tries to get to the underlying everything. (spring interview, p. 3)

Fisher (2003) further theorized that improving preservice teachers' capacity for critical thought requires modeling, feedback, and clear guidance. LeeAnne's student teachers recognized that they were receiving this modeling and guidance in the process. As Courtney recognized by the end of the year,

> Sometimes it's tough for the candidate, because she pushes you to those things and sometimes you don't want to, you just want somebody to tell you. But it's definitely to your benefit, because I know now, when I start teaching, I'll know how to go through that reflection process on my own. I think that will really help. (spring interview, p. 4)

All three supervisors' student teachers recognized that they were being pushed toward this process and expectation for growth. Mindy understood that she was expected to reflect but also felt that Jean gave her the clear feedback and guidance she needed to do this effectively.

> Researcher: How did Jean engage you in reflection?
>
> Mindy: She would say, ''Let's talk, let's come find a spot, let's talk.'' Then she would ask very open-ended questions. It wasn't just ''What do you think?'' She would say, ''What were your reasonings or your purpose, explain to me, I saw this, explain to me where it's going or where your thinking was at with this.'' So it was a lot of ''explain to me what you're thinking.''

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> Researcher: So she gave you some direction and not just saying ''what you think?''
>
> Mindy: Exactly.
>
> Researcher: But giving you a specific kind of structure to do it.
>
> Mindy: Kind of a half way to go, and kind of leading me down where I needed to go.
>
> Researcher: Okay. What do you think she believes about the role of reflection in learning to teach?
>
> Mindy: I think she thinks it's very EXTREMELY important. Pretty much necessity to be successful, for you and your students, you need to be reflective, is what I got from her. (spring interview, pp. 1–2)

The supervisors were successful in providing the support necessary for teacher candidates to begin to develop the necessary skills for critical reflection while also clearly communicating the importance of the skill set for the student teachers' future teaching practices.

Finding Three: Development of Critical Reflection Skills

It takes time for student teachers to develop critical reflection skills, which is true of the supervisors as well. Taking on the role of supervisor is one that typically shifts the teaching experience from work with children to supporting adult learners. Doing so requires that supervisors both understand and verbalize their beliefs about teaching and learning. This is a critically reflective process as the supervisor considers what she believes, and then works to locate and refine that knowledge for a new context and learner population. Engaging in this process is cyclical and time consuming as one begins to understand more deeply the relationship between beliefs and practice.

As a supervisor with a clear sense of her own stance and beliefs about her role, LeeAnne comments in particular on her growth as a supervisor this year because of her participation in this study:

> I think it's not just for me; I think that Jean, Andrea, and I have been more conscious of what we're doing and we've talked more about it. . . . I think this year I've seen more growth in myself. (spring interview, p. 1)

She recognizes that the growth over time has allowed her to better meet the needs of individuals rather than using a more global, whole-group approach to supervision. LeeAnne was explicit in how she instructed students to reflect and she modeled this in her interactions with them,

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both about their learning and their teaching. This suggests that she recognized the multiple influences of the attention to time, the need to model, and the importance of her own reflection on her practice as the necessary intersection of her role as a supervisor.

There was also attention to reflection and growth in the supervisors' own practices through discussion and support with fellow supervisors. When describing a change she made to help her students develop more reflective practices, LeeAnne commented on a new strategy she picked up from Jean:

> The reflection is much deeper, so they really are thinking about their practice. What worked, you know, first of all why am I going to focus on these two goals. How did it work? What am I going to do differently next time? And I could tell that they really were starting to focus on those goals. . . . So I think for me that was the most powerful thing. And just seeing that that was affecting their own practice, and they were really starting to be more reflective . . . they really are thinking about their practice and how it's improving or not. (spring interview, p. 2)

Of particular importance is the ongoing development of critical reflection in the supervisors as they were forced to consider and describe the experiences they had with student teachers. Jean understood that this is a continuing process, ''I will continue to think about next year and what it will look like, and how I can best support them and their actual teaching and learning, in addition to every other thing'' (spring interview, p. 11). LeeAnne recognized that this was part of her own growth and learning process:

> I really feel like I moved forward this year and I learned a lot, which I love, I love doing that. And learned a lot about what I could do to make it better. And I like thinking about it that way rather than just coming in and doing the same thing the same way. I like to think forward and think, ''How can I improve this?'' When I think about this piece of my practice I think it's energizing, that's what I like about it because I'm learning while I'm going with my students, and hopefully it's helping them too. (spring interview, p. 4)

LeeAnne and Jean were able to work through this process and develop self-understanding, and they seemed to have a clearer enactment of their stance in practice with student teachers. Like LeeAnne, Jean realized that there were areas that she needed to address and had set reflective goals for herself throughout the year:

> I think it's something I need to think a lot more about, but I really, really worked for myself on understanding those Praxis criteria so that I could

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> see again how I could help students to be successful in that. So I created [a sheet] for myself and shared it with my students, I shared it with my STEs, and I shared it with my fellow colleagues. (spring interview, p. 2)

Each of these findings suggest that learning and practicing the skills of critical reflection are time-consuming pursuits but ones that are worth the time that supervisors put into it if they want their efforts to pay into the development of reflective teacher candidates.

Implications for Teacher Education Practices

These findings suggest that supervisors are in the position to help student teachers learn the complexities of the profession, and opinions and choices about supervisory actions are filtered through the perceptions, beliefs, and stance of the supervisor. The findings also demonstrate the importance supervisors place on reflection in their own practice and in developing this in student teachers, and provided examples of successful field supervision practices that have the potential to give students the skills and motivation to develop and utilize reflection in their own practice. Finally, the findings suggest additional ways to enhance the quality of supervision through ongoing conversation for supervisors that supports the process of critical reflection in coming to better understand their own stances toward practice.

Student teachers typically have only one supervisor during their student teaching experience. Therefore, ''what is emphasized, and presumably learned, in a student teaching program is, in large part, a function of his or her relationship with a university supervisor'' (Zahorik, 1988, p. 14). University supervisors have the potential to use educative experiences, such as student teaching, to foster effective teaching practices in their students. A supervisor who models effective critical reflection during this crucial learning time has the potential to foster those same habits in the student teachers with whom she works. However, getting the student teachers to fully transform their habits of mind and take on the responsibility for their own professional development is a difficult process, one that requires systematic consciousness raising and critical reflection of one's assumptions, biases, opinions, and beliefs (Mezirow, 1997). Supervisors who not only model critical reflection but also specifically, outwardly articulate the process are able to fully ''demystify critical reflection'' for their students, demonstrating its potential and utility in their daily professional lives (Fisher, 2003, p. 324).

Engaging in reflection about the supervisor's own practice is connected to understanding her own stance, and the more a supervisor is aware of her stance, the more she can reflect on and respond to her

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own strengths and biases. Further, knowing her stance means that a supervisor has one more opportunity to model the idea of a teacher as reflective practitioner who is aware of and responsive to her own practice. This knowledge must come first from a willingness to engage in critical reflection oneself, examining one's espoused beliefs and how they may or may not be consistent with one's practice (Hart, 2002). It was evident that the supervisors' stances were strongly connected to their own beliefs about teaching and the goals they hoped to accomplish with their student teachers. In student interviews it became ever more evident that the awareness of one's own stance impacts the work with student teachers and the lessons they take away from the experience. Finally, knowing oneself as a supervisor has a wide range of influences on program components, because supervisors might be responsible for courses, weekly seminars, and learning and assessment approaches.

With the potential for such direct, significant impact on student learning and eventual teaching, it is imperative that researchers better understand how individual supervisors envision their stances and enact them in practice. Richardson (1996) echoed this assertion, claiming that ''research on teacher educators' beliefs and practices will be particularly helpful in attempts at reform'' (p. 115).

A major component of any effort for change in teacher education is professional development, and the responsibility falls in the hands of teacher education programs to provide the necessary support and professional development that allows supervisors to grow and change. Opportunities for individual and collaborative critical reflection and dialogue among supervisors can ''push one to move beyond a surface approach'' and result in significant professional growth (Walkington et al., 2001, p. 346). Whereas many supervisors work in isolation, the findings here show how engaging in critical reflection with colleagues can present other viewpoints, perspectives, and conceptions of supervisory practice. This could make it possible for supervisors to better meet the demands of the programs and the learning curve of the student teachers. The climate within which teaching takes place is constantly changing, necessitating change in teacher education practices as well. Finding ways to provide supervisors with opportunities to support one another and engage in critically reflective conversations is complex because of cost and time issues, but all three supervisors in this study expressed an interest in having such support and experiences.

Conclusion

It is critical to have supervisors understand their own stance on the process of learning to teach, as it impacts the specifics of their practice

with student teachers. Further, it is necessary for teacher education programs to consider the stances of the supervisors working in their program, looking for matches with the program's philosophies about learning to teach. This unity of purpose lays a strong foundation for teacher candidates in the process of becoming a teacher, promoting the kind of learning that we value in teacher education programs and in the classrooms of these future teachers. As Chelsea commented at the end of the spring interview, ''I think that you always learn more when it hits closer to home and when it comes from your heart instead of somebody else's'' (spring interview, p. 5).

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