

Joyce E. Bronteng

Let's get it Right: Helping Pre-service Teachers Become Self-Directed Learners

University of South Florida

Abstract

This qualitative self-study was to explore how I can improve my practice by using post-observation conference to help direct my interns towards self-directed learning. All the 11 female early childhood PSTs I supervised in the Spring semester participated. Multiple data sources including video recordings, interviews, questionnaire, and PSTs reflection notes, were used to collect data for the study. Using content analysis, I learned that my interns liked the ‘hybrid’ of directive informational and collaborative strategy I used for the post-observation conferences. Also, I learned that post-observation conference discussion is enhanced when observation data collected is useful and meaningful to PSTs. In addition, there were indication of some of the PSTs becoming self-directed learners as shown in their reflective notes and the videos. However, language and cultural differences coupled with my communication mannerisms posed a challenge to my intended effective relationship among the triad as it affected communication and understanding.

Introduction

Supervision has been one of the critical components of teacher preparation programs especially in clinically-rich teacher preparation institutions where field experience is a major component of their pre-service teacher's (PST) preparation (Burns, Jacobs, & Yendol-Hoppey [in press]; Dinkelman, 2003; Garman 1982; Ibrahim, 2013). With the paradigm shift in PST supervision in the USA recommended by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE [2010]), quality PST supervision has become one of the goals of Colleges of Education in universities and university supervisors are expected to perform effectively to the achievement of this goal. This therefore has complicated the supervision work of the university supervisors as they liaise between the university, the collaborating teachers (CTs) in the Professional Development Schools (PDS) and the pre-service teachers in the performance of their duty (Burns, Jacobs, & Yendol-Hoppey [in press]; Levine, 2011; Soslau's (2012). This implies that the effectiveness of the university supervisors to coordinate effectively between these parties is needed for the success of the teacher preparation programs.

However, research evidence and my personal experience as university supervisor in one of the USA universities show that most university supervisors lack the expertise in PST supervision due to inadequate (if not lack of) training and/or orientation (Capizzi, Wehby, & Sandmel, 2010; Ibrahim, 2013; Lee, 2011; Marcos, Sanchez, & Tillema, 2011; Memduhoğlu, & Zengin 2012; Soslau, 2012) to enable them perform effectively as expected. This lack or inadequate training for university supervisors make them go through myriads of dilemma in the performance of their supervisory duties. This becomes worse for international students who not only suffer from the inadequate training but cultural differences as well (Lee, 2011).

Looking at the vital role university supervision plays in the provision of quality teacher preparation programs to enhance the turnout of effective and well equipped trained teachers cannot be overemphasized. This requires university supervisors to do self-study as it will help them understand the job they do very well so that they can perform to expectation and improve their practice. Research evidence show that self-study helps practitioners to understand and improve their practice (Bullock, 2012; Bullough, & Draper, 2004; Burns, Jacobs, & Yendol-Hoppey [in press]; Dinkelman 2003; Ibrahim, 2013; Soslau, 2012; Lev, 2011). According to Dinkelman, (2003), “Self-study is a powerful tool that can be employed to serve any number of purposes in the preparation of teachers” (p. 15). With self-study, the practitioner will have the opportunity to study an aspect of his or her intern the way he/she performs in his/her job (practice) and how best it can be improved hence, the importance of self-study to novice university supervisors.

LaBoskey, (2004: 859) as cited in Bullock, (2012) also claims that self-study begins with individual practice; it ‘looks for and requires evidence of reframed thinking and transformed practice of the researcher’ (p. 147). This therefore shows that as an international university supervisor with struggles in the paradigm shift in PST, self-study is the right channel for me to unravel the problems as well as improve my practice so that my interns in particular and the university as a whole would benefit from my work. However, self-study in PST supervision is very limited (Bullough, & Draper, 2004; Dinkelman 2003; Marcos, Sanchez, & Tillema, 2011) especially those done by international PST supervisors (Lee, 2011). This well situates my study in the body of research as it shows the relevance of my inquiry to help in filling the gap in research. As Lee, (2011) points out, “There are few studies of the supervisory practices of university supervisors and none of the challenges faced by international doctoral students who work as university supervisors in American universities” (p. 2).

How it All Started

Working in an environment where just a little is known about the culture is one of the biggest challenges one faces in terms of communication and progress of work. Knowing the culture informs you to know more about the people you will come into contact with and the appropriate ways to conduct yourself to enhance effective communication. It becomes worse when one is thrown into the job without orientation especially where the past practices is undergoing a paradigm shift (transformation). This is the exact situation I found myself in when I landed in the USA as a first timer on Monday (August 2014) and I was to start work on the next day (Tuesday) as an instructor and supervisor in one of the South-Eastern Universities. It all began when I had two weeks delay in the issuance of my Visa due to technical problems at the USA embassy in my home country, Ghana. Initially, I did not see it as a problem because I thought I would be given some orientation as to how to go about the job because in the university where I was working before coming United States, new teachers are given mentors for at least one year to help the novice understudy the mentor to know how things are done in the school. I reported to work the next and I was given my working documents and the level I would teach with the schools that I would have to supervise. That was when my dilemma in supervision started.

The challenge of being a first timer in the US (not knowing my environment) coupled with the paradigm shift in the PST supervision (which I learned later that it is a problem even for the natives) began staring at me. Though some faculty members and colleague university supervisors tried to help, there were many challenges due to inadequate training, cultural difference and the change in program (new ways of PST supervision). The differences in PST supervision in my home country, Ghana and that of the US was not the only challenge I was facing, but also working with different people (placement school administrators, CTs, interns, etc.), mostly white

Americans. I did not know how the American school system worked especially regarding my relationships with the schools management in terms of communication patterns, the expectation of the CT and even my interns. Studies show that supervision thrives on collaboration (Bullock, 2012; Bullough, & Draper, 2004; Ibrahim, 2013; Levine, 2011; Soslau, 2012) therefore knowing the appropriate ways of communication that served as a base of collaboration was a challenge. Many authorities in supervision including Costa & Garmston, (2002) and Nolan & Hoover, (2010) talk about trust as being the basis for effective relationship between the coach and the supervisee and in my case the CTs needed to be included. They also assert that effective supervision is non-judgmental, developmental, reflective and collaborative.

Having a healthy relationship with authorities in my interns' placement schools especially the CTs as well as my interns could be achieved through effective communication. Communication became my biggest challenge because after understanding the paradigm shift in the PST supervision and the goal of my college to ensuring that their products (PSTs) are well equipped for the teaching profession in the USA, the focus in my supervision work was to use supervision conferences to help my interns to become self-directed learners. This is consistent with Nolan & Hoover's (2010) assertion that university supervisors need to set a conducive stage during conferences in order to encourage PSTs to be more active and collaborative in the reflection and analysis of the effectiveness of their lessons. They state, "We suggest that supervisors make clear their expectation that pre-service teachers will become increasingly capable of self-direction" (p. 223).

My aim of the study was to explore how I can use my post-conference to help my interns become self-directed learners. This wonderings came about as a result of the Supervision II course that *I* am reading this semester. Through the course readings and discussions, I learned that the

best thing I can do for my interns is to help them acquire self-directed learning habit where they will learn to solve their problems with little or without external help. The reflections on my past supervision show that I have not been serving my interns as expected because I have mostly functioned as an evaluator rather than a supervisor and even the little that I did in supervision was just telling my supervisee what I thought was good for them. Soslau, (2012) asserts that the overuse of just the 'Telling' strategy during post-observation conferences limits the possibility of discussions of the intern's specific/actual problem. From the knowledge acquired from my supervision course, using 'telling' alone will also make my interns dependent on me and then look as if they are helpless without me. The focus for my self-study is to see how best I can use post-observation conference to assist my interns to move from being dependent on supervisors for their problem solution to becoming 'problem solvers' so that they carry this onto their future teaching work.

This study is contextualized in Burns, Jacobs, Yendol-Hoppey's (In press) PST supervision conceptual framework. It specifically situates in the first two tasks: direct assistance and individual support of the five tasks for PST supervision developed by the above authors. These are practices that the PST supervisor need to employ to enable him or her achieve the said task. This study connects with the direct assistance because it deals with practices associated with giving feedback or facilitating feedback opportunities with interns. It fosters critical reflection, providing targeted feedback and adaptive expertise. The individual support deals with the psychological support that can be given to the PSTs to help them cope with the stress that comes along with the demands of learning they encounter within the clinical context. With the focus of my study: helping PST become self-directed learners, indulging in these two tasks with their respective practices become a good frame to achieving my purpose.

My focus was to explore a strategy that will help me reduce my talk time in order to encourage my interns to do more of the talking during our post-observation conferences as well as helping them do more reflection in the solution of the problems that the observation data brings up. That is, setting the stage in the post-observation conference where the interns will dominate the discussion of how best the problems that arose in her teaching could be solved to enhance their teaching. In other words, how to reduce the ‘telling’ strategy that I have used in my past supervision to a balanced talk time (even giving more time to the interns) or better put, to help me move between directive informational and collaborative supervision which supervision experts (Costa & Garmston, (2002) and Nolan, & Hoover, (2010) have recommend as well as supported by research evidence (Bullock, 2012; Bullough, & Draper, 2004; Ibrahim, 2013; Levine, 2011; Soslau, 2012).

Supervision experts see observation data (effective data collection and interpretation) as a vital tool to helping PSTs become self-directed learners. According to Nolan & Hoover (2010), “Self-direction’ includes making sense of observational data and subsequently using the data to make good decisions about teaching performance” (p. 223). In order to achieve my aim, I had this major working question for the study: In what ways can my supervision help move my interns to self-directed learning? To answer this, 4 sub-questions were derived from it to help guide my study: How effective are the tools I used to collect data for post-conferencing?; How do I foster the trust that needs to be built between my interns and me?; In what ways are my interns’ ‘voice’ heard during post-conferencing? and How does my post-conference move students towards self-directed learning.

Methodology

I conducted this self-study to explore how I can use my role as a PST supervisor to direct my interns towards self-directed learning. As Bullock, (2012) states, “Self-study methodology focuses on how teaching and learning experiences encourage teacher educators to see their practice in different way” (p. 146). The study was contextualized in the PST supervision frame specifically the direct assistance and individual support (Burns, Jacobs, Yendol-Hoppey [In press]). I used a qualitative self-study which allowed me to explore these supervision tasks empirically.

Participants

All the eleven female level 2 Early Childhood PSTs whom I supervised in the Spring 2015 semester participated in the study. They were all Whites with only one Black-American (10 Whites and 1 Black-American) who have lived all their lives in the US with English as their first language. They were placed in Title 1 schools in three different school sites in the same city: School A, School B and School C. (pseudonym for the schools). There were 2 interns in school A, 4 in school B and 5 in school C. All the participants were placed in Kindergarten (KG) with all having White female CTs with only one Black-American male CT (School B). Four of the interns were my supervisees in the Fall, 2014 semester. In all, 9 weeks was used for the conduct of this study. The first 2 weeks was used for familiarization and establishing the initial relationships with interns, CTs and the placement schools’ administrators especially the principals. The third week was for the informal observation where I tried my conferencing strategies with special focus on post-observation conference. Four weeks was used for the implementation of my post-observation strategy and data collection. Each intern had 2 formal observation (which is the requirement of the

university) and 1 informal observation (for the sake of the study). The last two weeks was used for the analysis and reporting.

How I Collected and Analyzed my Data

I used multiple data sources for the study. With the help of Costa & Garmston, (2002) and Nolan & Hoover, (2011) I was enlightened on different and effective data collections tools that suit specific problems/needs so the data collection device for the observation data was dependent on the interns' needs. During the pre-observation conference, I asked interns to give one area that I should collect data on, so that it would serve as the basis for the post-observation conference (Interns were made aware of the importance of this to the enhancement of their practice and professional growth).

The pre-observation conference was held at least a day before the delivery of the lesson to enable me plan for a data collection tool that would be suitable for the 'special area of focus' the intern wanted me to collect data on since I purposed to help direct my interns into the path of self-directed learning. According to Nolan & Hoover, (2011), "'Self-direction' includes making sense of observational data and subsequently using the data to make good decisions about teaching performance" (p. 223). Following this assertion of the authors and their further discussion on the effective ways university supervisors can conduct post-observation conference, I explained the data collection tool and the meaning of the symbols I would be using in the data to help them be able to interpret the observation data that would be collected. Those who had difficulty with the selected data collection instrument were scaffolded through questions and demonstration. During the post-conference, I used questions that made the interns come up with how the problems that were identified in their teaching could be solved. After the intern had said what she knew, I added

my voice to it. In situations where the intern had difficulty in coming up with how the problem could be solved, I gave examples to ease them to the finding of solution.

I videotaped the post-observation conference with each of the interns to help me see how I conduct post-conferences (See Appendix A for length of videos). I watched all of the recorded videos to help monitor my progress. Every intern was observed three times including the additional ‘informal’ observation I had because of this study. The ‘informal’ observation was done between the two required formal observations. However, the video recordings were done for only the formal observations. Also, I called PSTs on phone regularly (at least once a week since they went for internship twice a week) to see how they were faring with the discussed strategies aside from the weekly seminar class. I also made students write reflection on their observed lessons.

I used questionnaires (Appendix B) to solicit interns’ view on the post-conference strategy. The questionnaire had 3 main items that solicited interns’ perception about the post-observation conference, how they saw their roles in the post-observation conferences. It was through the formative analysis (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014) of the questionnaire that made me add interview to my tools. Whenever I came back from supervision, I formatively analyzed the data for the day by watching the video of the post-observation conference, and read my field notes to enable me identify the emerging issues and also be reflective to improve my practice. It was through my formative analysis that I identified that most of the interns’ responses to the questionnaire item that required them to indicate their roles in the post-conference was not clear as most stated ‘Reflector’ as their role. So I interviewed (Appendix C) all the 11 interns for them to clarify what they meant by ‘Reflector’. The interview also enabled me to ask interns’ preference of post-observation strategy with special focus on whether they liked what I used or the ‘telling’ strategy. The interview was fused into the final post-observation where the last few minutes of the

post-observation conference was devoted for it. Like Lee, (2011), I was committed to being consciously involved in planning, acting and reflecting cycle that is involved in action research and self-study.

Data were qualitatively analyzed using content analysis to derive the themes. Three video recordings, one from each of the three schools were randomly selected for the study. For the videos analysis, I designed a tabular tool using the practices of direct assistance task and individual tasks recommended by Burns, Jacobs, Yendol-Hoppey [In press]), as the focus (Appendix C: Sampled video data & interview). Three tables were made for the video analysis: 1. To show the length of each video (Appendix A), 2. To show the time I spent on each of the practices and that of the intern and 3. To show the number of times I, as well as the intern indulged in a particular practice. That is, the video analysis was based on the time spent on each practice and how often each occurred during the post-conferencing. For the questionnaires, interviews and the interns' reflection notes, I coded for the ideas and patterns that emerged from them.

Findings

Effectiveness of my data collection tool for post-observation conferencing

From my analysis, I found that using appropriate data collection device for collecting observation data was beneficial to both the intern and the supervisor. It was shown that relying on just one data collection device for every observation is not helpful as I used to do in my previous supervision. Because I varied my data collection tools according to the intern's need, I was able to collect data that generated discussion during our post conferences. This was evidenced in the post-observation conference video recordings (See Appendix B for sample) as most of the interns

became active in the post-observation conferences. This also helped me to reduce my ‘talk time’ for the interns due to their active involvement.

Another important finding was that because I decided on which tool to use prior to observation and discussed it with the intern ahead of time, it made the data collection and interpretation easier for me as well being meaningful to the interns. I found that to have effective data for post-observation conference discussion, the needs of PST determine the choice of data collection tool as data collection tools have specific purpose(s) they serve. I also found that focusing on one area of the PST teaching at a time enhances data collection. This type of data collection helped us to have a well-focused post-observation conference where the area of concern was discussed in detail rather than the general type where issues were discussed in bits. However, I faced challenges in the usage of some of the tools initially because I did not get practical ‘formal’ training on their usage. The use of these tools were a sort of ‘on-the-job-training’ but it became better as I progressed.

Building relationships on trust

The issue of establishing relationship with both the CTs and PSTs was not as easy as I envisaged. This made me have an empirical experience of McGatha’s, (2008) assertion that it is sometimes challenging implementing what seem simple in books in a real life situation. I found that building relationship within the triad on trust is not easy especially in situation where differences in language and culture exist. Differences in the language background of the triad and my inappropriate communication mannerisms (like interrupting my interlocutors when talking) which the video data revealed posed a challenge to my quest for establishing relationship in trust, though there were some positive signs. For example, the video analysis (See Table 1 under “Interns’ ‘Voice’ during post-conferencing”) showed that I interrupted my 3 interns 8 times within

the total time of 43:66 with interruption occurring 3, 3 and 2 times respectively. This coupled with other mannerisms like excessive/negative gesturing and ‘choppy’ utterances (that I saw in the video were things I did not know about myself until this study) worked against the relationship I envisaged.

The language barrier was my most difficult challenge as it frustrated my aim of trying to build relationships on trust at the beginning of the study especially on the part on the new PSTs. However, 4 of the PSTs who I supervised in the previous Fall semester (who were used to my language and could understand me very well) helped me tremendously in solving part of the language problem. Whenever they were around, they served as mediators between their colleagues and me in two of the placement schools (Schools B & C). They also helped me to understand some of the American culture connected to communication. These behaviors of these students gave me signals of trust as they were ever prepared to help ease my discomfort.

I also found that frequent communication with people enhance communication barrier like differences in languages due to accent because my communication with the other PSTs was enhanced due to the conscious effort I made to have regular communication with these interns. The regular calls I had on phone and the face to face discussions we had at seminar meetings and the observation conferences helped us (PSTs and supervisors) adjust to each other’s language which enhanced our communication and this had positive impact on our relationship. This was evidenced in the interview when a follow up question on intern’s preference of observation strategies (Appendix C-Interview data). From her response, I asked her whether she saw collaboration in the post-conference discussion and this is what she said, “Yeah, Yes, definitely. It’s a lot of issues. I mean, I think we’ve gone a lot better with communicating more efficiently. Because, before, I feel like it was less communicating (not clear) but now”

One thing worth stating was about two interns' persistent preference for directive informational/Telling strategy throughout the study and therefore did not willingly open up for the relationship I wished to build. With these two students, no matter how convincing I sounded, they never showed interest in the post-observation strategy I used. The reasons they gave was that it was my job to be telling them the right thing to do and also my style of supervision wasted time and it was too demanding. When I asked them during the interview to explain why they always wanted supervisors to use the 'telling' strategy, this is what they said:

Student Y

“(Mentions my name)! But that is your job (giggles). This is what you are paid to do. See, (paused) I don't know that is why you're here to assist. If I knew, I wouldn't do the wrong things for you to have them for discussion. Just tell me and I will do that. You know me, I will do it to the latter. See how I struggle before I answer your questions. (Paused and sighed) (Mentions my name), you need to tell me what I have to do.” (Interview, 3/25/15).

Student Z

“I see this as a waste of time. In level 1, my supervisor will tell me what to do and that ends it. She goes straight to the point and was specific. This is making post-conference unpleasant these days.” (4/25/15).

Though the relationship I envisaged was not fully achieved, there were indication that some of the interns were developing trust in me because they opened up and discussed issues freely during discussion and were willing to help me out with the language issues.

Interns’ ‘Voice’ during post-conferencing

On the issue of knowing how my intern’s voice is heard during post-observation conferences, the analysis of almost all the tools (videos, interview, questionnaire and the reflective notes) gave an affirmative findings. The analysis of these data showed what I will call a balanced talk time for both of us (intern and supervisor). It also indicated that interns liked the hybrid (combination of directive informational and collaboration) strategy I adopted for the study.

Table 1 shows the practices we indulged in and the time spent on each. For easy identification of the supervisor’s roles are in bold print and italics whilst that of the interns are in normal print.

Table 1: Videos Analysis showing roles played by supervisor and PST during post-conference with times

| Video | Video Time | Supervisor Practice | | | | | | | | | PST Practice | | | | | | | Total | |
|--------------|------------|---------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|------|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| | | <i>fR</i> | <i>P</i> | <i>cF</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>C</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>I</i> | <i>SI</i> | R | S | Sm | J | T | A | Th | I | | Sl |
| 1 | 12:78 | .18 | .68 | 2.38 | 1.05 | .42 | .38 | .58 | .25 | .78 | .38 | 1.22 | 2.45 | .54 | .25 | — | .68 | 1.02 | 12.78 |
| 2 | 15:09 | .11 | 1.13 | 1.98 | 1.28 | .38 | 1.65 | .64 | .67 | 1.27 | .98 | .82 | 1.59 | .19 | .85 | .89 | 0.6 | .05 | 15.09 |
| 3 | 15:79 | .20 | 1.02 | 1.89 | 1.52 | .54 | 1.03 | .68 | .28 | 2.03 | 2.38 | .86 | 1.08 | .43 | .89 | .87 | .25 | .15 | 15.79 |
| Total | 43:66 | .49 | 2.88 | 6.25 | 3.85 | 1.32 | 3.06 | 1.9 | 1.2 | 4.08 | 3.74 | 2.9 | 5.12 | 1.16 | 1.99 | 1.76 | 1.53 | 1.22 | 43.66 |

Note. Supervisor: *fR*= Fostering critical reflection *P*= using probing questions *cF*= providing corrective feedback *S*= support *C*= challenge *A*= acknowledge *I*= interrupted *SI*= silence

Pre-service Teacher: R= reflecting S=suggesting solution Sm=Summary J=justifying decision T= Trying to find solution A=acknowledgement Th=Thoughtfulness I=interrupted Sl=silence

Table 1 shows a fair balanced time distribution in our post-observation conference discussion. For example, looking at the time distribution between the intern in video 3 for school C, it could be seen that she used slightly more time than I did, whilst in video 2 (school B), I used

slightly more time than the intern. Personally, this finding was very encouraging, in that it gives me hope that my old practices (e.g. the use telling strategy) can be changed if I desire to.

Table 2 (which shows the number of times each of the behavior/practices occurred) also confirms this finding as shown in the frequency of behavior occurrences.

Table 2: Number of Times Behavior Occurred During Post-Conference

| Video | Video Time | Supervisor | | | | | | | | | | PST | | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | | <i>fR</i> | <i>P</i> | <i>cF</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>C</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>I</i> | <i>Sl</i> | R | S | Sm | J | T | A | Th | Sl |
| 1 | 12.78 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 1 | _ | 4 |
| 2 | 15.09 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| 3 | 15.79 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 43.66 | 8 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 11 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 12 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 8 |

Note. Supervisor: *fR*= Fostering critical reflection *P*= using probing questions *cF*= providing corrective feedback *S*= support *C*= challenge *A*= acknowledge *I*= interrupted *Sl*= silence

Pre-service Teacher: R= reflecting S=suggesting solution Sm=Summary J=justifying decision T= Trying to find solution A=acknowledgement Th=Thoughtfulness I=interrupted Sl=silence

In addition, the interview responses (See sample in Appendix C) and that of the questionnaire were indicative that interns’ voices are beginning to be heard at our post-conferencing. For instance, when I asked the PSTs to use one word or phrase to describe their role in post-observation conference with me in the questionnaire, most of them used the word ‘Reflector’ (which they later explained in the interview (See sample in Appendix C) to mean that they reflect and to answer the questions. Examples of interns’ responses for the meaning of the ‘Reflector’ included the following: “Urrh, I think a reflector is someone who reflects or thoughtful about things. Or like what we have just done. I reflected on a lot of things to make urrh

suggestions”, “Someone who gives a critical look at something and work at it to make it better”, “(paused) as we are doing, I am reflecting on my lesson... given a thoughtful look into something and finds solution”. Other example of interns’ responses from the interview to the question, “How do you see the post-observation conferencing strategy?” included the following:

“I really like it, I really like it because you’re not just telling us. Liked great questioning because it makes me reflect, it gets me thinking and I really like it. Because and I reflect a lot and some stuff that you don’t notice you did. Yeah, it gets you really thinking so I really like it. (paused) I am definitely learning more because am being reflective, like I think about different strategies and just like every other question is really good to reflect on. (Interview, 3/23/15)

The reflection notes that PSTs submitted after observation also showed that they liked the post-conference strategy because their voices were heard which made them feel part of the discussion. Some even said it was making them reflect critically about their teachings even lessons that I did not observed. When the participants were asked whether they liked their being part of the problem solving process, most of them answered in the affirmative. For example some said: ‘I really liked it. It works pretty much for me. It makes me feel appreciated’, ‘It was difficult at first but I am comfortable about it. It making me feel part of the conversation. I don’t just listen, I contribute (paused). (Mentions my name), see I tend to remember my part more than what you tell me’, (laughs heartily) ‘(Mentions my name), this is making me develop my problem solving skills’, ‘I liked it because it makes me think and reflect on the way my teaching went and how to help solve the challenges that came up’. These responses showed that generally, the interns liked the ‘Hybrid’ of directive informational and collaborative supervision strategy I used because they became part of the conversation. However, I could not fully work on my interrupting PSTs when

they were talking which showed up in my formative analysis of the videos and I tried to work on during the study. The final videos indicated that this ‘improper’ communication behavior of mine though were minimized, some still showed up in post-observation conferences video analysis (Tables 1&2).

Using post-conference to move students towards self-directed learning.

The analysis of videos, questionnaires, interviews and interns reflective notes showed that most of the students were being reflective about their practice and could give brilliant ideas about how the identified problem could be solved. Some of the participants were also surprised at their own performance and potentials. There were some objectivity in some of the interns’ reflective notes. Some of the interns were objective in assessing their own teaching in their reflection notes.

Excerpts from an interns reflective notes:

“I believe I was partially successful with lesson, the lesson could have been more engaging and lively if I had varied my strategies. It could have been pretty lively if I made students form sentences with the words they formed with the ‘family slider’ or organized a healthy competition between the tables by colors.” (Reflection note: 3/27/15)

“Even though, there were bumps in the road with lack of control and differentiation, I felt that this lesson went well. I am excited to work on the strategies I reflected about and make my lesson even better.” (Reflection note: 4/3/15)

Some interns also talked about how the reflections and the post-observation conferencing were helpful in their practice. Examples include the following:

“Even though, there were bumps in the road with lack of control and differentiation, I felt that this lesson went well. I am excited to work on the strategies I reflected about and make my lesson even better.” (Reflection note: 4/9/15)

Reading such reflections and excerpts from the interview responses tell me that the interns are seeing the importance of working out solutions for their problems themselves. Interview responses that connect with this finding included:

“...I feel like we reflect more now, so it’s a lot more like self-reflection. I really liked that, urrh, just because it gets you thinking. I also like that we’re doing the reflection paper because you really get thinking about, (not clear), ok, especially the questions that you had to answer for the reflection paper really get you thinking. Ok, like what I did and how I can make it better ok and the stuff. So I really like it.” (Interview, 3/23/15)

When interns were asked how they would you feel if their level 3 supervisor repeats this post-observation conference strategy or use similar strategy, most of the interns’ responses showed that they would like it. Their responses included the following:

Yeah, I think it is good to have the balance of both. So I definitely like it. Like tell me “something and so continue to use the questioning” (Interview, 3/23/15)

“I would like it because it makes me reflect about the lessons I teach. Since my first observation (referring to the informal one), I have been reading and thinking about teaching strategies and how to make my teaching better. Something I did not do in my level field experience even though I didn’t like it initially” (Interview, 3/27/15)

“What! I will welcome it. They liked the balanced nature of the whole approach. I like it but it sometime it is hard to figure out solution to the problems” (4/10/15)

I learned from these responses that interns appreciated the reflective thinking that comes along with the approach I used and they were becoming confident by being part of the problem solving process. The findings indicated that using data that is of interest to interns in post-observation conferences motivated them (interns) to take active role in the discussion. Because I collected data that were of interest to the interns and also made easy to comprehend due to the initial briefing of the tools, most of the interns were enthused to participate.

Discussion and Implications

My Engaging in this self-study as a doctoral student, teacher educator and a supervisor has served as a mirror revealing my real self in my role as listed above. As hard as I tried, there were struggles between my former and new selves (my old and new supervision strategies) as Tables 1 & 2 showed especially with my interrupting the interns. This was consistent with McGatha, (2008) assertions that some of the things we see in literature are not easy to implement empirically. It made me feel the reality of the supervisor I aspire to become and the challenges that come with it. Though I faced challenges that sometimes got me frustrated initially especially with language and effective use of the some to the data collection tools, things got better as time went on. For example, my relationship was much stronger between my interns and me and even that of the CTs. My regular emails and phone calls enhanced our communication as we became used to each other's language. Being conscious of how power dynamics can have negative effect on intern (Bullough & Draper, 2004) intrinsically encouraged me to make conscious efforts to respect the views of my interns as well as the CTs which also promoted the development of our relationship to some extent. Though the duration for the implementation of my strategy was not long, the success has shown the efficacy of it and has given me confidence that I can continue with it. The probability of these

strategies working better in my home country is high because over there I would not have the language problem which was my major hurdle in this study.

Also, I have learned from this study that the needs of PSTs determine the choice of data collection tool for the observation for effective supervision. This is because, data collection devices have specific purpose(s) they serve and that using just one tool for every observation is not appropriate for effective supervision. Similarly, focusing on an area of PST's need at a time is very helpful (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2014; Nolan & Hoover, 2011) in that it makes you focus on just one thing to collect data that would be useful to the supervisee. Moreover, to foster self-directed learning in supervisees, it is beneficial to let them (supervisee) understand the data collection device and symbols to be used so that they will be able to interpret the data collected and make sense of it. This connects with Nolan & Hoover's (2011) claim that, "Self-direction' includes making sense of observational data and subsequently using the data to make good decisions about teaching performance" (p. 223). The results clearly showed that effective and appropriate data collection and interpretation enhance interns' participation in post-observation conference and motivate them to participate in supervision conferences especially post-observation conferences. This therefore indicates that relying on telling strategy alone cripples the potentials in interns (Soslau, 2012).

This finding confirms the findings of existing studies that university supervisors face the challenge of inadequate training for the PST supervision (Burns, Jacobs, & Yendol-Hoppey [in press]; Ibrahim, 2013; Levine, 2011; Marcos, Sanchez, & Tillema, 2011). It is even worse for international students who are made to do this job (Lee, 2011), for they do not only suffer from inadequate training but also language and cultural differences that exist between the two cultures (the foreign country's culture and that of the supervisor) at play. Considering the important role

university supervisors play in the provision of quality teacher preparation which the NCATE (2010) and other researchers (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Dinkelman, 2003; Garman 1982) advocate, it is imperative that university supervisors are given initial training or orientation (especially international students [Lee, 2011]) on things like types and uses of data collection devices, how to use the supervision materials especially the filling of the FEAPs coaching tool, and some appropriate communication culture in US etc. to ease or usher them into the work. Another thing that needs to be looked at is overloading supervisors with more interns at a time. This in a way is a contributory factor to their ineffectiveness because less or reduced PSTs per supervisor enhances regular visits/contact which help foster relationship and promote effectiveness.

The complexities in PST supervision is so real that self-study should be a compulsory part of PST supervision to help solve the inadequate training problem university supervisors' face (Burns, Jacobs, & Yendol-Hoppey [in press]). Personally, this study enabled me understand the ultimate aim of self-study to improve practice (Dana, & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). I have learned so many things about myself that I have never known all my 22 years of teaching experience. Though it was not easy conducting this self-study as an international student as indicated by Lee (2011), it was worth doing. The videos, aside from helping me see how I conducted my post-observation conference revealed some inappropriate non-verbal practices (gesturing) which Costa & Garmston, (2002) refer to as paralanguage that I have been engaging in all this while. The videos also showed how I interrupted my interlocutors during conversation as well as the 'choppy' utterances. All these were revealed to me through the conduct of this self-study via the video data.

The findings led me to another challenge that could be solved efficiently through the same channel (self-study) because these serious behaviors need immediate attention as communication is the bedrock of supervision especially with the supervisor I aspire to be. I am keen to adopt

supervision strategy that involves effective communication and establishing relationship that is built on trust recommended by supervision experts (Burns, Jacobs, Yendol-Hoppey's [In press]; Costa & Garmston, 2002; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2014; Ibrahim, 2013; Nolan & Hoover, 2010 etc). This self-study has shown that if supervisors get it right by using the appropriate supervision strategies, we would help turn out well equipped teachers who will help promote the quality education that we all yearn for.

I learned that post-observation conference discussion is enhanced when observation data collected is useful and meaningful to PSTs. That is, if the data for discussion is useful to PSTs, they are intrinsically motivated to participate actively in the post-observation conference. Also, when PSTs feel supported and respected by their supervisor they are confident to share their views on issues as well as sharing their challenges with their supervisors. This is consistent with Bullock's, (2012) claim that 'It is important for faculty liaisons to create a relationship grounded in mutual trust, a relationship in which risk-taking is encouraged and talking about difficult teaching moments is seen as the sign of a reflective practitioner, not as a sign of weakness' (p. 14). Reading the interns' reflective notes and their interview responses revealed how confident and objective they (interns) are becoming in reflecting on their own lesson and brilliant suggestions they offered for the improvement of their practice.

Conclusion

This study has challenged and identified my tacit understandings about letting PSTs have a voice in post-observation conference especially in problem solving. I hope that the descriptions of the problems of practice that I encountered as an international university supervisor in a clinically-rich teacher preparation institution stimulate the reader to think about his or her own

assumptions and experiences in the paradigm shift in university supervision of PSTs. Field experiences within pre-service teacher education program are powerful but complex (Burns, Jacobs, Yendol-Hoppey's (In press) therefore self-study is the best channel that supervisors can use to improve their practice to have positive effect on the interns. PST supervision being the only part of the program that provides opportunity to interact with interns in both the theoretical setting of education courses and the practical setting of the placement schools, supervisors need to create a productive learning context that the best opportunity to address explicitly epistemological barrier between theory and practice. Self-study has provided me with a critical lens of my own practice as university supervisor moving from being strictly evaluative supervisor to collaborative orientation. By analyzing my supervision role in the paradigm shift in university supervision (NCATE [2010]), I am better able to provide opportunities for interns to construct professional knowledge and the essence of being self-directed learners from their field experiences.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Length of Video

Table 3: Length of selected Videos for the study

| Video/School | Length of Videos |
|--------------|----------------------|
| 1 (School A) | 12:78 Minutes |
| 2 (School B) | 15:09 Minutes |
| 3 (School C) | 15:79 Minutes |
| Total | 43:66 Minutes |

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Instruction: *Please, answer the following questions as objectively as you can. Do not write your name on the paper*

1. a. Tell me something you learned from your last post conference with Joyce.

1. b. What did you do with your answer in (1. a)?

2. a. Give me a word or a phrase to describe your role in post observation conference

- b. Explain briefly your answer in (2. a.)

3. a. In a sentence, give a critical assessment of your experience of this semester's post observation conference.

- b. Give a brief explanation of your response to (3. a.)

Appendix C: Video 2 (School B) Analysis with its Interview data

Video 2 Analysis and Interview data

| Video Time | Supervisor's Role | PST's Role | Interpretation/ Reflection |
|-------------|--|---|----------------------------|
| 00:00-00:35 | Acknowledged PST's lesson | | A |
| 00:36-00:43 | Asked PST to self-assess her teaching | | fR |
| 00:44-01:02 | | Gave self-assessment of her lesson | Sm |
| 01:02-01:19 | Interrupted PST | | I |
| 01:20-01:24 | | Justified the success of her lesson | J |
| 01:25-01:35 | Asked PST to give specific examples (e.g) of the success of the lesson | | P |
| 01:36-02:00 | | Gave e.gs of what she thinks went well | R |
| 02:01-02:30 | Interrupted PST and asked her to fix my microphone on the camera in the mid of her speech | | I |
| 02:31-02:56 | | Continued to give specific e.gs | R |
| 02:57-03:10 | Asked PST to explain why she thought the e.gs she gave added to the success of her lesson | | P |
| 03:11-03:56 | | Explained with justification | J |
| 03:57-03:04 | Silence | Silence | S/ |
| 04:05-04:20 | Provided observation data for discussion | | S |
| 04:21-04:33 | Told her what she could have done | | cF |
| 04:34-04:55 | | Justified why she did what was recorded in the data | J |
| 04:55-04:59 | Silence | Silence | S/ |
| 05:00-05:08 | Asked PST to suggest strategies that could be used to solve the identified problem in the data | | C |

| | | | |
|-------------|---|--|-----------|
| 05:09-05:28 | | Suggested e.gs of strategies | S |
| 05:29-05:33 | Asked her to give more e.gs | | <i>fR</i> |
| 05:34-05:39 | | silence | SI |
| 05:40-05:53 | Gave e.gs of some the strategies the PST used during her lesson to guide her | | S |
| 05:54-06:14 | | PST interrupted and gave few e.gs | I |
| 06:15-06:20 | Praise PST for the e.gs she gave | | A |
| 06:21-06:26 | Asked PST to explain who she would use the strategies discussed | | C |
| 06:27-06:49 | | Explained how she would use one of the strategies | S |
| 06:50-07:00 | Probed further | | P |
| 07:00-07:19 | | Struggled with the answering and tried to justify what she did | T |
| 07:20-07:32 | Pushed PST to offer suggestion on how she would use the discussed strategies | | C |
| 07:33-07:53 | | Offered brilliant suggestion that amazed both of us | S |
| 07:54-08:05 | Offered other strategies | | S |
| 08:06-08:13 | | Added on another suggestion | S |
| 08:14-08:28 | Interrupted PST by asking her to summarize the strategies discussed | | <i>cF</i> |
| 08:29-08:59 | | In the course of the summary she suggested another strategy | S |
| 09:00-09:05 | Asked PST to continue with her summary | | <i>cF</i> |
| 09:06-09:30 | | Summarized the strategies discussed | Sm |
| 09:30-09:40 | | Wrote the strategies in her note | Th |
| 09:40-10:22 | Acknowledged PST's brilliant suggestions and her thoughtfulness for writing down the strategies for reference | | A |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|-----------|
| 10:23-11:02 | | Gave further reasons for her action (writing down what she has learned) | Th |
| 11:03-11:28 | Interrupted PST to explain why I use 'praise' | | A |
| 11:29-11:35 | Silence | Silence | <i>S/</i> |
| 11:36-12:03 | Raised another point in the data and told PST what she should have done | | cF |
| 12:04-12:40 | | She justified action/what she did | J |
| 12:41-12:51 | Gave explanation based on PST response/justification | | cF |
| 12:52-13:05 | | Interrupted with justification | J |
| 13:06-13:24 | Interrupted PST with explanation | | I |
| 13:25-13:34 | | Supported my explanation | R |
| 13:35-13:49 | Asked PST to explain why the explanation of the punctuation marks came at the end of the lesson | | C |
| 13:50-13:54 | | Asked for clarification of question | R |
| 13:55-14:04 | Clarified question | | S |
| 14:05-14:23 | Acknowledged PST for the lesson and her active participation in the discussion | | A |
| 14:24-15:09 | | Showed her appreciation of the trend of discussion | A |
| Interview part of the Video | | | |
| Video Time | Questions | PST Responses | |
| 15:10-15:43 | Q1. How do you see the post-observation conferencing strategy? | | |
| 15:44-17:06 | | Answered in affirmative: I really like it, I really like it because you're not just telling us. Liked great questioning because it makes me reflect, its gets me thinking and I really like it. Because and I reflect a lot and | |

| | | | |
|-------------|---|---|--|
| | | some stuff that you don't notice you did. Yeah, it gets you really thinking so I really like it. (paused) I am definitely learning more because reflective, like I think about different strategies and just like every other question is really good to reflect on. | |
| 17:07-17:14 | Q2. If you compare this to last Fall semester's post-conference, which one would you prefer? | | |
| 17:15-17:20 | | I like this, I definitely like this post-conferencing | |
| 17:21-17:23 | (Interrupts) But last semester we had post-conferences in which I was telling you a lot of things | | |
| 17:24-18:03 | | No o! I feel like we reflect more now, so it's a lot more like self-reflection. I really that, urrh, just because it gets you thinking. I also like that we're doing the reflection paper because you really get thinking about, (not clear), ok, especially the questions that you hat to answer for the reflection paper really get you thinking. Ok, like what I did and how I can make it better ok and the stuff. So I really like it. | |
| 18:04-18:24 | Q3. So what do you mean if you say someone is a 'Reflector'? | | |
| 18:25-18:56 | | Urrh, I think a reflector is someone who reflects or thoughtful about things. Or like what we have just done. I reflected on a lot of things to make urrh suggestions | |
| 18:57-19:19 | So if Joyce is to supervise you the next time, would you like her to use the same or similar method where you would be asked to do more of the talking? | | |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|--|---|--|
| <p>19:20- 19:39</p> | | <p>Yeah, I think it is good to have the balance of both. So I definitely like it. Like tell me something and so continue to use the questioning</p> | |
| <p>19:40- 20:02</p> | <p>Q4. From what you are saying, do you see collaboration in our post-conference discussion? How?</p> | <p>Yeah, Yes, definitely It's a lot of issues. I mean, its, I think we've gone a lot better with communicating more efficiently. Because, before, I feel like it was less communicating (not clear) but now</p> | |