Restructuring a traditional student teacher supervision model: Fostering enhanced professional development and mentoring within a professional development school context

Adrian Rodgers\textsuperscript{a,*}, Virginia L. Keil\textsuperscript{b}

\textsuperscript{a}The Ohio State University at Newark, 1179 University Drive, Newark, OH 43054, USA
\textsuperscript{b}College of Education, The University of Toledo, 2801 West Bancroft Street, Toledo, OH, USA

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to pilot an alternative student teaching supervision model at a college of education in a US context. In the study, the collaborators used multiple paired dyads to supervise student teachers with multiple supports from college faculty. This study examined how teachers and university faculty planned the use of paired dyads and how participants responded to the innovation. The findings suggest teachers and junior faculty can undertake bottom-up reform within larger systemic constraints.

Keywords: Mentoring; Supervision; Student teaching; Professional development school

1. Introduction

For a long time student teaching has been held in low regard by schools, colleges, and departments of education, and this low regard is sometimes enculturated into the academy (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Hoover, O’Shea, & Carroll, 1988). The task of supervising falls largely on junior faculty, adjunct faculty, or retired teachers. At the same time, in-service teachers receive negligible training from the university to prepare them for their new roles as cooperating teachers (Kent, 2001). As a result, the quality of the student teaching experience can vary greatly. As Zeichner (1992) noted, it is virtually impossible to guarantee that student teachers will have the opportunity to be supervised by talented and gifted teachers and faculty members.

Although the supervision of student teachers is rife with challenge, little reform has been undertaken. When Guyton and McIntyre (1990) reviewed the history of supervision, they observed that “more student teaching innovations were reported in 1968 than in 1982” and that “most reported in 1982 were reported in 1968” (p. 522). Over the past 15 years, many scholars have continued a tradition of inquiry into supervision. Despite this inquiry, the structure of the student teacher supervision triad—the cooperating teacher, student teacher, and university supervisor—remains largely unchanged. Given that the nature of the student teacher supervision triad remains static, educators have the opportunity to redesign the student teaching experience.
experience generally—and the supervision structure specifically—so that it is aligned with current theories regarding supervision.

Because we work as faculty members at large research institutions in the United States, we feel daily pressure from policy makers to undertake educational reform. Although we are subjected to this top-down pressure, we are then left to articulate how we can institute these reforms with classroom teachers. We are especially interested in how the classroom teachers respond to and implement change at the local level. In other words, while we work in a culture where top-down reforms are mandated, we want to support teachers in articulating bottom-up change.

Traditionally, student teacher supervisors have as their unit of analysis the preservice student teacher. In our case, because we are interested in how in-service teachers responded in a bottom-up way to reform demands, we looked at how in-service teachers responded to the development of a restructured preservice teacher supervision model. Our idea was that we could offer a graduate course on site to in-service teachers in supervision. We simultaneously hired the in-service teachers and employed them in their traditional role as cooperating teachers in their own classrooms, as well as in a new role as university supervisors of student teachers who were working in different classrooms in the same building. Our plan was to not only provide a dual role to in-service teachers, but also to realize additional professional development opportunities out of the arrangement. Thus, this study is largely an inside account that examines what occurs when teachers and university faculty work in close collaboration over a long period, using new strategies with a research-oriented focus on teaching embedded in ongoing professional development initiatives in a large school context. The significance and promise of such research is suggested by its concern for what occurs when teachers engage in the kinds of extended and closely collaborative professional development initiatives now called for by many reformers.

2. Theoretical framework: a bottom-up theory of change

Although schools, colleges, and departments of education hold the primary responsibility in articulating models of student teaching supervision, in-service teachers have critical knowledge, skills, and dispositions that can support education faculty in their supervision efforts. One reason in-service teachers play a critical role in supervising preservice teachers is because, over time, they can build trusting relationships with the novice based on trust, reflection, and empowerment (Kent, 2001).

In-service teachers who work in collaboration with university faculty have also developed a second set of skills (Raphael, 2004) that can be applied to the supervision context. These teachers are well versed in knowledge building, coaching, assessment, and reflection. Indeed, Raphael suggests that in-service teachers who collaborate with university faculty are often adept at grabbing hold of a piece of a larger initiative and implementing one or two pieces of it.

Third, in-service teachers have the ability to work together to create a culture that supports the discussion of student learning (Wilson & Berne, 1999). When in-service teachers can support an examination of teaching, the ability to teach can be developed (Ma, 1999; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). Thus, it is the unique ability of in-service teachers to build relationships with preservice teachers with the goal of integrating components of university initiatives and to enculturate teachers into a community that studies teaching and learning that make in-service teachers powerful allies in teacher preparation.

Because in-service teachers are critical allies in preservice teacher supervision, scholars have recently attempted to articulate perspectives from which in-service teachers operate. In their review of perspectives on learning to teach, Wang and Odell (2002) articulated three perspectives identified in the literature: the humanist perspective, the situated-apprentice perspective, and the critical-constructivist perspective. We would like to borrow more heavily from the latter two.

According to Wang and Odell and others, the situated-apprentice perspective is characterized by three assumptions. First, development is linear, moving from textbook representations of teaching to the act of teaching (Wang & Odell, 2002). Second, the cooperating teachers are experts with practical knowledge (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) and have the ability to act as local guides (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992). Third, settings relying on a situated-apprentice model stress practical knowledge and the “ability to articulate practical knowledge and make it accessible to novices through coaching and demonstration. More important, the
training develops mentor’s skills in guiding novices to cope with immediate problems of teaching” (Wang & Odell, 2002, p. 496).

On the other hand, the critical-constructivist perspective, according to Wang and Odell (2002), reflects two assumptions:

One is a critical assumption that the fundamental goal of learning is continuously to transform existing knowledge and practice toward emancipatory ends.... The other is a constructivist assumption that knowledge is actively built by learners through the process of active thinking or, in biological terms, assimilation and accommodation. (p. 497).

In 2002, Adrian, one of this article’s authors, documented how the instructional traditions of a school can have a powerful impact on instructional choices (Rodgers, 2002). But teachers are not trapped by their school culture. With careful attention to the interaction between knowledgeable other and learner, it is possible to identify learner needs, know what needs to be taught, and tailor instruction to learner needs (Rodgers & Rodgers, 2004).

It seems then that looking back on 35 years of supervision scholarship, teacher educators have learned several things. First, we know that the supervision triad is a model practice that has resisted change in the face of reform. Even with calls for more rigorous initial teacher preparation, the preparation of the cooperating teachers and university supervisors who work with the student teachers remains unchanged. Second, we know that scholars and policy makers working in the area of reform have articulated a different culture within which preservice teacher supervisors should operate. This culture is characterized by collaboration over time with an emphasis on reform. Third, we know that despite the fact that the academy has maintained the status quo regarding structures of preservice teacher supervision, it is possible for individual cooperating teachers and university supervisors, at the classroom level, to embrace parts of a reform agenda and implement change in their supervision of preservice teachers. Fourth, when we look at the theoretical base regarding supervision, we find two useful perspectives that inform our work: that those who supervise preservice teachers play a role in supporting a novice so that they can become situated as an apprentice of teaching, and that supervisors can support novices in becoming change agents.

This present study represents one version of how the research we reviewed on scaffolding might be implemented in a supervision setting. Very few scholars have attempted to implement an alternative to the supervision triad. These scholars have attempted their work within the context of professional development schools—school sites that work in rich collaborations with universities or other large-sector institutions (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In general, these scholars followed the practices summarized by Zeichner (1992). In the case of Sandholtz and Wasserman (2001), university faculty compared the attitudes regarding problems, benefits, and program components between a cadre of student teachers placed in a traditional placement and a cadre of student teachers placed in a professional development school; they were able to show the strengths of using both sites. Beck and Kosnik (2002) tried an immersion method whereby university faculty members situated themselves in the school and immersed themselves within the context of the student teaching experience.

While scholars have begun to articulate how supervision might be restructured, policy makers have suggested the characteristics that should underpin change. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF, 1996) suggests that new approaches connect teachers to one another through in-school teams and cross-school professional communities that tackle problems of practice over time. Though different in some respects, all of these approaches share certain features. They are

- Connected to teachers’ work with their students;
- Linked to concrete tasks of teaching;
- Organized around problem solving;
- Informed by research;
- Sustained over time by ongoing conversations and coaching. (pp. 42–43).

Since we were looking at student teaching, we began to think about how we could incorporate these features into an alternative student teaching supervision model.

3. Articulating an alternative student teacher supervision model

To assist us in rethinking our approach to supervision, we considered historic work on
educational reform and then postulated new possibilities that would be aligned with a reform-oriented approach.

3.1. Supervision through the 1990s

We observed that at the college of education where we conducted this work (part of a large institution with about 23,000 students in the Midwestern United States), student teaching supervision followed what we perceived to be a traditional model. The student teaching office, a college-level administration office, reviewed student teaching applications and placed student teachers with cooperating teachers. Since the student teaching office required the cooperating teachers to file six written observations, a traditional supervision triad approach was used by adding a third member to the student teacher–cooperating teacher partnership. The university supervisor, typically a retired teacher, was also required to make six observations. Many of these retired teachers were great assets to an overstressed and overburdened student teaching office, and we often wondered what brought them back to work as supervisors when they were minimally compensated. While everyone in the college of education was thrilled that this cadre of retired teachers was so helpful, we did realize that there was sometimes a range of talent among the retired teachers and that they were sometimes disconnected from current school practices and college of education expectations. In summary, when we reviewed our student teacher placements, we were disappointed to see that we were maintaining a supervision model from the 1970s that has been criticized in the literature for the past 25 years (Berliner, 1988; Carnegie Task Force, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Griffin, 1985, 1989; The Holmes Group, 1986).

3.2. Re-visioning the supervision model

In an effort to reinvent some of our practices, high-level university and school officials committed themselves to a professional development schools initiative. This initiative, the administrators decided, would have multiple layers of involvement from the college of education, the college of arts and sciences, and multiple schools and school districts in a metropolitan area. After this announcement, however, the senior administrators removed themselves almost entirely from the initiative, charging principals and administrative college of education staff with deciding exactly what was to be done. They, in turn, asked teachers and faculty the question “What do we want to do?” In this case, we can see a good example of a top-down policy initiative that necessitated a bottom-up response.

3.2.1. The concept

Because the identification of what needed to be changed came from the bottom-up, college of education faculty were able to identify our 1970s supervision model as problematic. It was not aligned with the ideals of professional development schools, and we needed to reinvent our supervision practices.

We decided we needed a new concept of how to supervise student teachers, so we worked to design a new approach that captured the qualities described in some of the literature in our effort to have more authentic discussions regarding supervising student teachers. We wanted an opportunity for cooperating teachers to talk to one another, and we wanted student teachers to have the opportunity to talk to each other. Additionally, we sought to provide new opportunities for classroom teachers to contribute to shaping their profession. We wanted student teachers to have more contact with faculty who had terminal degrees, and we wanted cooperating teachers to work with faculty for mutual benefit so that all the participants could develop a richer and more robust understanding of teaching.

When only one school in one school district maintained a response to the professional development school initiative, we focused our attention on that school. Fortunately, the staff of the school also had some interest in the goals that we articulated above. Given the experience level of the school staff and their interest in restructuring supervision, we thought a paired-dyad model would work well. We had been working extensively with Ann and Brenda (all names in this article are pseudonyms), two veteran Grade 10 English teachers, on earlier initiatives. We also knew that Ann had been assigned Arnette as a student teacher, and Brenda had been assigned Berne as a student teacher.

It occurred to us then that instead of sending out an adjunct faculty member from the university, Ann and Brenda could work with each other on the supervision of Arnette and Berne. The idea was that Ann would continue in her role as Arnette’s cooperating teacher, and Brenda would serve as Berne’s cooperating teacher. Additionally, at other
times during the school day, Brenda could visit Ann’s classroom to see Arnette teach, and at the same time Ann could visit Brenda’s classroom to see Berne teach. Although this use of the paired dyad was ingenious in its simplicity, it provided a stunning array of opportunities:

1. Ann and Brenda could continue in their roles as cooperating teachers which they already knew well. These roles included hosting a student teacher in their class, acting as a local guide, and serving as a mentoring “buddy” to the novice.
2. Ann and Brenda did not have to rely on a university adjunct “parachuting” in to evaluate their student teacher.
3. Ann and Brenda had the opportunity to step outside their classroom to see the workings of another classroom. This was a possibility that could never have occurred previously because the school district required that student teachers be directly supervised, precluding Ann and Brenda from accepting other opportunities within the school.
4. When Ann and Brenda visited each other’s student teacher, they acted as a university supervisor, a position which came with the following benefits: a very small university salary, university identification and parking pass, library privileges, and (importantly) the right to list an additional employer on a résumé.
5. At the end of the day, Ann and Brenda could debrief with each other and the student teacher as a triad. In this way, Ann and Brenda could begin a professional dialogue about the supervision process. There was the additional benefit of also discussing the pedagogy and the curriculum, so that the dialogue between Ann and Brenda could go well beyond supervision to become its own form of professional development.
6. Additionally, the paired-dyad approach provided the student teachers with opportunity. The student teachers could easily consult with their own university supervisor because the university supervisor was in the adjacent classroom. This helped promote enculturation in the school and was superior to the previous practice where the university supervisor had only telephone contact prior to the first visit. Because the student teachers knew each other well, Arnette could, for example, ask Berne about Brenda’s expectations. Thus, each student teacher could communicate with their university supervisor in person and also with their peer who was also a student teacher.
7. The teachers, in their joint role as a combined cooperating teacher and university supervisor, had the option to meet with their student teachers as a group of four. This possibility could be useful when the paired dyad wanted to brainstorm planning possibilities.

3.2.2. Implementing building capacity: the concept in the field

While we liked the concept, we had also been charged by senior-level administrators to create and maintain an extensive relationship between the college of education and the professional development school. Therefore, we felt we would need to utilize more than two cooperating teachers and two student teachers. We also understood that the shift from a triad model of supervision to a paired-dyad model would require the commitment of additional college of education resources. We were reluctant to commit additional resources for two cooperating teachers and two student teachers. Therefore, to build capacity and to address concerns in shifting from the triad model to the paired-dyad model, we developed our next innovative feature. We decided to use multiple paired dyads, a total of 12 combined cooperating teachers/university supervisors and 12 student teachers, in one school to trial our innovation.

The decision to use multiple dyads with faculty support also provided an array of opportunities:

1. Our decision to use multiple paired dyads supported senior-level administrators’ need to build an extensive relationship that went beyond one or two teachers working with one faculty member. It also helped us to address concerns we had with the implementation of our new supervision model. One concern we had lay with an undergraduate education seminar taken by all student teachers. This seminar was intended to debrief student teaching experiences; but since it typically met on campus, we were concerned that the course had become divorced from what occurred in the field. Using our alternative model, we had clustered 12 student teachers in the same school building. Because of this we were able to retain the student teaching seminar, but we could schedule the course meetings at the school.
2. Because there were a sufficient number of student teachers at one school to warrant a course offered on site, we could also send some additional student teachers—who were not part of our restructuring initiative but were student teaching at nearby schools—to class meetings at the professional development school. This also meant that we could reposition a faculty member from meeting the student teaching seminar on campus to meeting them at the school, thereby extending our penetration at the professional development school.

3. An additional concern we had was the new role that our in-service teachers undertook. We realized that we had assigned them the dual responsibilities of cooperating teacher and university supervisor, but we had not provided them with support in their new university supervisor role. To address this concern, we offered a graduate course that explored the role of the university supervisor on-site at the professional development school. All of the teachers who worked as university supervisors, as well as some other teachers at the school, completed the seminar. Since the in-service teachers were also university employees, they were also eligible for fee reductions.

4. A final concern was that the offering of a graduate-level seminar meant the college of education could allocate an additional faculty member to teach the class on-site at a school, once again extending our penetration into the professional development school.

Given our interest in how we could restructure the student teaching experience to foster different kinds of opportunities for the participants, we devised our research questions to explore these collaborative processes:

1. What planning can university faculty and school teachers undertake together to construct an alternative student teacher supervision model?
2. What challenges occur in the articulation of this model?

4. Goals and method of the research

We conducted ongoing inquiry into the evolution of our professional development school relationship over several years, but for this study we report on data we collected during the first semester of our new supervision model.

We used a qualitative case study approach (Patton, 1990) to provide an in-depth description of our pilot program involving 12 in-service and 12 preservice teachers during a university semester. We employed a participant-observer approach (Patton, 1990) and adopted Glesne and Peshkin’s (1992) view that we could act as both observers and as participants, moving back and forth on a continuum of possibilities. For example, during the implementation of our pilot program, we tended to act principally as participants when we were leading classes and supporting the redesign of the supervision model and principally as observers when we viewed student teacher–cooperating teacher interactions.

4.1. Background

In an effort to identify potential professional development school sites, the dean at our college of education invited many school districts to participate, but only one district moved forward in a sufficiently substantive way so that faculty members could negotiate entrance into the school. It is this school that is the subject of this study. We began our study by identifying smaller, shorter-term objectives of mutual interest to groups of teachers and faculty. During the first year, monthly meetings typically lasting 4 h anchored most of our collaboration. During the last months of the first year, there was pressure from a number of factions to move the professional development school initiative forward in a more substantive way, and it was during this time that the concept of piloting an alternative student teacher supervision model was discussed. After support pieces fell into place during the beginning of the second year, we implemented the pilot in the last half of the second year.

4.1.1. The setting

Wheatfield High School is one of two large high schools in Wheatfield, a suburban school district on the outskirts of a medium-sized city in the Midwestern United States. Wheatfield offers Grades 9–12 to a student population of about 1300 using a teaching and support staff of about 100. The students and staff from Wheatfield are mostly Caucasian. We found that because of the smaller size of the school, teachers or department heads instead of administrators could address difficult
4.1.2. The population

For the most part the 12 Wheatfield staff who collaborated with us were similar to the rest of their peers at the school in that they were mid-career teachers who had begun teaching with the Wheatfield school district 10–20 years before. We concentrated our efforts on the English and foreign language teachers because of their interest in the idea of acting as a combined university supervisor and cooperating teacher. Finally, a degree of trust already existed because these teachers had prior relationships in varying capacities with college of education faculty.

4.2. Data collection

Data were collected throughout each year of our professional development school activity. Our sources included (a) minutes of monthly meetings from all 4 years, (b) field notes and journals kept by the authors and other collaborators which recorded conversations with different stakeholders and which focused on the day-to-day efforts of the collaboration and how the stakeholders made sense of the initiative, (c) transcriptions of a weekly audiotaped graduate class where the teachers read and discussed mentoring literature with each other and the university professor, and (d) a document analysis of materials created by teachers and faculty who were a part of the professional development school but not a part of the study. Additionally, during the first 3 years of the study, a group of teachers led the development of a revised student teacher handbook. In the fourth year of the study, we shared emerging trends and products with five teachers as a way of conducting a “member check” and then used their feedback as an additional form of data.

4.3. Analysis

In analyzing our data, we undertook five categories of analysis: organizing, categorizing, testing, proposing alternative explanations, and reporting data (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The nature of the data source dictated our focus of analysis. For example, when we examined audiotapes of graduate class meetings of teachers, we were interested in how they created a construct regarding mentoring. Later, after documents such as a student teacher handbook were created, we analyzed the degree to which the construct of mentoring was represented in the handbook.

As an additional step in the segmenting of data, we examined each planning or class session and then considered each sub-event of the planning and mentoring. It was helpful to organize the data in this way because it meant that we had the capability to look only at a particular kind of session (such as a planning session) or to look at all of the different kinds of sessions that, when added together, became a generally agreed-on procedure regarding the documentation of student teaching. After we sorted the data, we undertook further analytic choices including coding and looking for patterns (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

These initial analytic procedures enabled us to generate trends that we noted. These notes were helpful for developing sensitizing concepts or ideas that represented the early emergence of material that we would later cluster together to develop trends. By combining the use of notes and the sensitizing concepts that were generated from them, we were able to develop a number of “analyst-constructed typologies” (Patton, 1990, p. 390), or ways to group the subjective understandings of our analysis. As a hypothesis began to emerge regarding the multiple roles of these teachers, we developed a coding system (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). We found that as we read through our data, we were able to classify the data according to a number of characteristics. In this way, our coding scheme helped correlate subjective notes from the field with our coding of transcribed data.

For this case study, we spent hundreds of hours in one professional development school teaching and observing over a 4-year period, over 45 h coplanning classes directly related to the student teacher supervision redesign effort with collaborating teachers, and over 20 h reflecting with the collaborating teachers on the classes that we taught. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) explain that the amount of time spent in the field works to strengthen the trustworthiness of the study’s findings. Indeed, the teachers who collaborated with us spent much more time implementing the principles of this model than we, as college instructors, would usually invest in planning most of our courses. Additionally, the use of a large amount of data enabled us to triangulate our findings both within each type of data and between different types of data.
5. Results

In coding the data, we noted that findings emerged that corresponded to a progression from discussion to action.

5.1. Talking about supervising

As with any project that involves people filling new roles with new expectations and requirements, it was difficult to anticipate what and how much communication would be necessary before the student teaching experience began. Before the experience began, all cooperating teachers were provided with a student teaching handbook (a document written by staff of the college of education’s student teaching office) that outlined student teacher requirements. This document served as baseline information for all of the teachers involved in supervising. The handbook also included specific tasks for cooperating teachers, as well as charts that clarified when and how information should be communicated between participants.

A combined orientation session for cooperating teachers in their new roles as cooperating teachers/university supervisors and for student teachers was held prior to the beginning of their placement. The session was an opportunity for the student teachers to meet the cooperating teachers/university supervisors, school administrators, and other student teachers assigned to the building. The cooperating teachers/university supervisors believed this was useful to the student teachers since it provided an opportunity to review school policies and procedures, introduce key personnel, and clarify roles and responsibilities in the high school. Approximately half of the teachers involved in this project had prior experience working with student teachers; however, none of the teachers had had prior training working as a supervisor of student teachers. The graduate class provided an opportunity for the cooperating teachers to review literature regarding supervision of student teachers and to participate in extended discussions regarding how to support student teachers in entering professional roles.

Adrian taught this class, beginning it by asking the cooperating teachers to suggest areas of interest involving supervision. Their suggestions included coaching, supervision, feedback, reflection, and evaluation. The teachers began to research these possibilities, and they identified articles that would be valuable to the participants as they began to function as both cooperating teachers and university supervisors. Cooperating teachers shared articles and discussed them during each class meeting. Jane reflected,

If we’re going to be cooperating [teachers]—[the article] suggested 3 full days of cognitive coaching seminars that teach us to do our job. [They also say] you need to have dialogue, you need to meet at least once a month with everyone that’s involved with [the] process,…and you need to have questionnaires or journals, that you as the cooperating teacher are filling out for yourself, to improve upon your own teaching, and use this as a positive experience.

As a part of her new role within the paired-dyad model, Jane experienced conflicts with the tasks the literature identified as significant, the tasks she might reasonably be expected to undertake, and the tasks she had undertaken in prior cooperating teacher experiences.

There were multiple difficulties posed by the conflicts Jane experienced. One of these difficulties was a sort of cognitive dissonance where the literature suggested she should do one thing, but the realities of the classroom and her relationship with the university dictated that she do something else. Another difficulty was that the tools we were in the process of developing were not as sophisticated as those she read about in the literature; this left the impression we were “behind the curve” rather than “riding the wave” of innovation. Finally, lack of time meant Jane felt she could not address her two difficulties.

Monica elaborated on this: “Every article I’ve read says…time, time, time, we don’t have enough time. As teachers we need motivation for reflection and there’s nothing right now that motivates us as teachers to reflect on what we do.”

Most significant about Monica’s claim is the identification of reflection as a critical component of being a cooperating teacher. In other words, it is not enough to talk about teaching; it is also essential to actively deliberate regarding one’s own teaching practices and one’s feedback to a student teacher. Since Jane and Monica were part of piloting the restructured supervision model, they felt it was necessary for them to change the criteria for selecting fellow future cooperating teachers. They also felt it was important that because they were piloting an initiative, they could act as local guides for cooperating teachers who might use the paired
dyad in subsequent years at their school or at other schools.

After much discussion, the teachers decided to establish nonjudgmental criteria for the selection of cooperating teachers. Gus’ final comment summarized much of this discussion:

We need to put people in as [cooperating teachers] that are looked upon, not only by their peers but by their students, as people who are teachers that are not necessarily good because they’re cool and they let me do this, and they let me do that. ... A [cooperating teacher] is going to be one who obviously is reflecting on what they’re doing. As a teacher, she has that something that makes the kids click and they realize it. ... We want people who are constantly progressing with education—the way education is open to new techniques and teaching.

The questions depicted in Table 1 were established as guiding criteria to help teachers to understand their role as a cooperating teacher and supervisor, and they were subsequently recommended to an executive professional development school committee that included the principal of the school, central office staff, and senior college of education administrators.

At the time it was unknown if these questions would be used by the principal to select cooperating teachers, but the teachers seemed satisfied with their initial efforts of recommending the use of guiding principles.

5.2. From talking to transforming

As a part of the cooperating teachers’ desire to transform the way they supervised student teachers, they perceived they could customize their support if they knew more about the student teachers they were being asked to work with for 4 months.

Initially they saw this task as one of quality control. They wanted to identify the “best and brightest,” as identified by grade point averages, so that they could host these student teachers at their school. As full-time university employees, we knew this was problematic for a number of reasons—reasons that cooperating teachers needed to know.

We explained that the university articulated a minimum grade point average as a part of its teacher credential requirement, but beyond that it would not discriminate on the basis of grade point average in terms of placements. Indeed, the student teachers the cooperating teachers worked with represented a cross-section of all the student teachers the student teaching office placed. We also pointed out that even if the cooperating teachers at the pilot site could discriminate in terms of quality, this would not assist us in knowing how to work with student teachers struggling to learn how to teach. Finally, we pointed out that grade point average by itself was not a particularly strong indicator of teaching talent; in fact, we suggested that as educators, we wanted to support all novices in growing into the profession.

Based on these arguments, the cooperating teachers augered for two resources from the university. They not only wanted information on the student teacher so as to customize the support, but they also wanted information from the faculty member who had taught the student teacher in earlier methods courses. Through this request, they reasoned they could build relationships with methods faculty, and they could also extend their

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Request for cooperating teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s name ____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade level ______________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content/classes taught ____________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following questions have been established as guiding principles for the selection of cooperating teachers/supervisors of student teachers. Please review the questions before submitting this form to the office.

Are you willing to preconference with your student teacher prior to observations?

Are you willing to postconference with your student teacher after every observation?

Are you willing to attend group meetings with other cooperating teachers and supervisors so problems can be collaboratively resolved?

Are you willing to reflect upon your own teaching?
dialogue about teaching to include more participants.

The difficulty now was to establish what information should be requested. By looking to the literature and their own decisions regarding how cooperating teachers could assist student teachers, the cooperating teachers requested that the university supply (a) evidence of strong content knowledge by student teachers, (b) evidence of the student teachers’ skill level before the experience began, and (c) evidence the student teacher had practiced reflection throughout all prior field experiences. Even this request was difficult to accommodate since the confidentiality of the student teachers’ prior academic records prevented disclosure of many types of data. So the cooperating teachers decided to interview student teachers prior to acceptance in their classrooms, hoping to glean information prior to the placement. They supplemented these interviews with contacts between the cooperating teachers and the methods faculty.

Having established a basic outline of the information desired before assigning student teachers to the school, the discussions within the graduate course on supervision and at other meetings shifted to methods of transforming feedback and evaluation to support the development of the student teachers’ skills and abilities.

5.3. From transforming to articulating

In addition to conceptualizing the support pieces required to implement the restructured supervision model, cooperating teachers also needed to articulate how the concepts would work. By articulate, we mean how the day-to-day practices of supervision were to work so they embodied the spirit of the restructured model.

5.3.1. Evaluating and assessing teaching

A key component of the articulation process was the documentation of teaching competencies and the development of a method to determine grades that would be a fair assessment of the student teacher’s performance. A part of this work was recording precise observations that could be used to justify a grade. As Pat, a methods faculty member explained, cooperating teachers must document what you’re seeing and what is happening in the classroom so your conversations can be very precise. The student teachers will know what’s working based on what you have recorded. … It’s not what you like in the class, it’s what is working in the class.

To support this effort, the cooperating teachers agreed to use the same set of observation forms based on Praxis criteria, a rubric established by the Educational Testing Service (ETS; a testing organization based in the United States), so the students would become comfortable with the process and get similar feedback from two sources (Educational Testing Service (ETS), 2002).

The process of evaluating the student teachers’ performance resulted in weeks of conversation along with a degree of anxiety on the part of some cooperating teachers concerning assigning letter grades for overall performance. Monitoring the performance of the student teachers while striving to be objective dominated the discussions. Jane observed, “The grading process is clearly more subjective than objective.” Juanita added, “I think it’s easier to justify marking somebody down, as opposed to giving them an A or a B.” Gus commented, “I’m thinking if Stellar Person is an A, that doesn’t mean that everyone else is A minus. I’m thinking that we need to discriminate based on the evidence. If not, then we are doing a disservice to the outstanding student if we put that person with others who are in the middle.” At this point the teachers were struggling with how to characterize student teacher performance, and they began to separate their role as cooperating teacher from university supervisor.

In the past, it had always been the responsibility of the university supervisor to determine and assign the final grade with input from the cooperating teacher. Vic expressed concern regarding his new role:

If he [the student teacher] has the possibility of being a good teacher in the future but gets a C now, then applies for a job 20 years from now and the employer sees that he’s got a C, he’s done. It’s not like, say a business administration class where you can always go back and take another class to show that you’ve mastered it. It’s going to dog him. That’s the problem that I have with giving grades—it’s going to dog him for the rest of his career in education.

Juanita asserted,

If we allow poor performance and then we don’t take it into consideration in their grade, then
what are we saying? What are we sending out there? What does it do to the university? What does it do to us? What does it do to the teaching profession?

Adrian, as the instructor who facilitated the graduate seminar, began to redirect discussions from assigning final grades to developing skills and determining effective methods for helping the student teachers find their own teaching styles and performances. Upon visiting the class, Virginia, who is a coauthor of this study and at the time directed the student teaching office, explained,

Student teaching is not the cloning of the cooperating teacher; it is allowing this individual to grow and develop and to have the support structure of an experienced teacher. As a cooperating teacher saying everything the student did wrong and never saying how we can correct this, the student will become very dependant and fail to grow. Your role is moving them forward.

The teachers began to read and discuss articles that examined best practices of supervisors.

Discussions ensued regarding what novice teachers should know and be able to do, as well as how to assist student teachers in gaining new skills and abilities. The teachers agreed that what was obvious to them might not be obvious to novices. The cooperating teachers/university supervisors suggested their role should include frank information to student teachers about elements such as personal appearance, initiative, and being on time in order to avoid conflicts during the classroom experience. This assessment of the student teachers would become part of the evidence cooperating teachers/university supervisors would include and discuss at three points during the 10-week experience: during the initial student teacher–cooperating teacher orientation, at a mid-quarter assessment, and during an exit conference.

5.3.2. Documenting teaching

The cooperating teachers/university supervisors continued to concentrate upon planning, lesson implementation, and classroom management as the three skill areas necessary for success as a classroom teacher. It was agreed the evidence in these areas must be specific and continuous throughout the experience. A plan was suggested to provide student teachers with a standard observation format that addressed strengths, areas of progress, areas of needed improvements, and even strategies after each observation. In this way, observations of in-service teachers who were acting in the dual roles of cooperating teachers and university supervisors were consistent. Zoe thought,

It gives direction and clarifies to the student the areas that are necessary to work on and improve. If you’re not specific...you’re putting the student at a disadvantage and we don’t want that. You tell them. Do not make it a guessing game. You might even say that this is what I’m going to focus on. That might be making sure they teach the whole 55 min and making sure the lesson is ready to go. But you have to focus them.

After the teachers had an opportunity to pilot several different observation forms and they gained experience focusing pre- and postobservation conferences based on a record of evidence, they felt much more confident in their dual roles of cooperating teacher and university supervisor. Nevertheless, several still faced final evaluation conflicts with student teachers. It was clear to teachers that one 10-week experience was not enough time to practice and improve their new supervisory skills.

5.3.3. Communicating between participants

Another challenge that surfaced was communication between student teachers and cooperating teachers. As with any relationship, initially everyone was collaborative and flexible, but meaningful communication does not occur without challenges and conflicts. Cooperating teachers had certain expectations of the visitors in their classrooms. Juanita stated, “Admittedly, when we got out as teachers, we developed our own style of lesson plans, but there’s nothing wrong with us telling them [the student teachers] right now—here’s how we want your lesson plans to look.” Thus, the student teachers faced the challenge of fitting in and negotiating new relationships while learning how to teach.

Each cooperating teacher/university supervisor had preconceived expectations for her or his assigned student. For example, lesson planning varied with each teacher’s expectations. Zoe noted,

Every week I receive a nice columned lesson plan for each day—going down—what activities were going to be performed, what objectives he was trying to accomplish, what pages in the book,
what films were going to be shown. And I’ve got one for every week. He did a great job. He probably set the standard by the way he did it.

On the other hand, Vic observed that his student teacher basically copied the level of detail that Vic put into his own lesson plan:

I want to say I was a little lax in that or whatever—but I had copied our lesson plan book for the student teacher’s use, and he basically did his lesson plans the way I do....He didn’t necessarily write things down.

Initially, the cooperating teachers did not believe the differences in their level of planning detail would be problematic. The problem for Vic then was that his own lesson plans had the kind of detail one might expect of a veteran teacher. They might be characterized as teaching notes. Because the student teacher had so closely copied Vic’s style, the student teacher’s brief notes were insufficient to allow Vic the opportunity to assess the student teacher’s planning skills. Student teachers quickly realized the differences between cooperating teacher expectations. As a result, each cooperating teacher handled student teacher concerns about these differences differently. Martha offered, “I’ll give you a hand for the next couple of days....and then you’ll be fine”; whereas Gus responded, “I think everybody has to be aware of expectation differences and take care of his or her own business and not worry about the other guy.”

Although cooperating teachers had often talked about their student teachers in the past, the high level of collaboration and the close proximity in which the participants worked meant that the cooperating teachers were the subject of many conversations; they were not accustomed to this. Generally, cooperating teachers did not see commentary on their own teaching and supervising practices as emancipatory, but rather as an obstacle. Juanita explained:

And that’s the down side of a professional development school because these kids [student teachers] do talk to one another, they do eat lunch with one another, they do compare notes. Don’t anybody in here think otherwise. Each one of our student teachers—they know exactly what’s going on in everybody else’s room in here and exactly what the expectations are.

Vic commented, Part of what is happening here is because we have this unique partnership experience where the student teachers are not only having the opportunity to talk with one another, they’re being encouraged to talk to one another in their courses that they’re taking in conjunction with this experience. And so with the partnership we’ve seen the benefits of this, but we’re also seeing a drawback that’s coming out of it as well.

As time passed, it seemed as though everyone was talking and no one was listening. Productive communication seemed to be breaking down within and between several cooperating teacher–student teacher dyads. The student teachers did not believe the cooperating teachers were acting as advocates on their behalf and that they were siding with their colleagues. One student teacher commented,

My teachers are best friends and they talk all the time. It just feels like I can’t do anything right, and everyone is talking about it. Who is supposed to stand up for me? It seems like no one is in my corner.

Some groups became dysfunctional until Virginia and the principal worked to develop communication bridges. The cooperating teachers/university supervisors and student teachers welcomed this intervention, and the project again moved forward.

In addition to the strained communication between student teachers and school faculty, approximately 3 weeks into the project the principal received several telephone calls from parents of students who had student teachers in three or four of their classes. The parents expressed concern about the disadvantages to their children being taught by so many novice teachers. The principal reassured the parents that the content taught by the student teachers was overseen and directed by the in-service teachers and was in alignment with district curriculum standards. He also indicated that both the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor reviewed the lesson plans to make certain goals and objectives were established and achieved. Finally, he discussed the extensive supervision that was occurring. The parents seemed satisfied with the principal’s explanation and agreed the project might have some unanticipated benefits.
6. Discussion

We set out to change the supervision structure used by our college of education so that it more fully captured principles of reform identified in the literature. We quickly discovered that restructuring entailed more than changes in practices, roles, or duties. Instead, it precipitated a shift in ways of thinking and a rethinking of supervision which previously was straightforward. Most importantly, we learned that restructuring supervision was more complex than switching from practices that did not work to those that did. Restructuring, at least within the professional development school context, is a radical departure from previous ways of working to new ways of working—new ways that feature unique problems.

6.1. Features of restructuring a supervision model

When we began to examine the process of restructuring a supervision model, we noticed two features.

6.1.1. Bottom-up change

It is possible for bottom-up change to occur within a top-down initiative. In our case, a school superintendent and college of education dean created a professional development school in name, but left it to the participants to articulate how that partnership was to work. To initiate partnering, we undertook activity on a number of fronts, and it is because of this activity that we saw the need to restructure the supervision model. Thus, in the case of this study, a loose framework was created by top-down entities, and individual teachers and faculty could work within the framework to reculture supervision practices.

Indeed, teachers and perhaps their university counterparts, junior faculty members, might be particularly adept at taking hold of a piece of a larger initiative, seeding it with ideas and energy, and growing it into practice. But this is not without shifting previous mindsets. For example, if teacher educators commit to customized levels of support for student teachers, they need to change their own planning or teaching practices so that their modeling reflects what they want students to do. This is a burden for teachers since student teacher documentation functions are above and beyond what they would do in their teaching of children. In other words, while there are perks in the restructured supervision model for cooperating teachers, there is the additional documentation role that goes with being a university employee. Thus, within the restructured model, cooperating teachers must “walk the walk,” both with respect to enhanced modeling and to documentation requirements.

Bottom-up change also means that teachers, to some degree, must work with systems that are beyond their control. They must accept that, in addition to taking on new roles, they will need to perform roles without having all the information they would like to have. When teachers accustomed to the traditional role of the cooperating teacher shift to the dual role of cooperating teacher and university supervisor, with the added responsibility of having considerable input into teacher education supervision models, decision making rapidly becomes complex.

6.1.2. Partnerships: individual and institutional

Just as university faculty members worked with teachers on bottom-up change, the combined efforts of many individuals meant that the relationships between institutions also evolved. Often, the shift in institutional relationships was most noticeable when there were challenges, conflicts, or problems. These problems had not been anticipated when the project first began, but resulted in new discussions regarding the future of the supervision project. Meetings occurred between university and school personnel with both partners agreeing to the importance of continuing to monitor the project closely. It was evident that the problems had shifted from school or university problems to partnership problems. With this new mindset came the realization that the project provided more than a student teacher placement site. The field component became more than helping student teachers to become comfortable with the routines of the classroom. Gabriella concluded,

The collaboration between staff members [teachers] and student teachers has generally fostered a more positive attitude among the teachers who have participated in the program, in particular to student teaching and developing student teachers in our school system. I’ve really felt that the interaction has created a sense of bettering the school. We are now able to look at the future and see people we want to hire.

The project provided an opportunity for a school and university to examine their work
collaboratively. It was not an attempt to offer easy explanations, effective supervisory techniques, or quick fixes. Instead, it offered one partnership’s attempt to understand what each partner does, struggle to know each other, and attempt to learn the difficulties of practice.

6.2. Implications

Like most teacher educators, we are interested in the implications of this work, both for the world of practice and the world of scholarship. It is interesting that tension, which poses challenge in the world of practice, poses possibility in the world of scholarship, so we consider these tensions in this section.

6.2.1. Implications for practice

Research in teacher education, including our findings, points to the significant influence of tensions in reform. According to Friesen (1993),

Learning to teach requires immersion in the ‘real world’ of practice, not just for ‘experience’ but for the development of interpretive experience in the ‘teaching world.’ However, this teaching world, in which the intern and cooperating teacher dwell, is riddled with tensions. (para 3).

These tensions are not necessarily negative, and indeed tensions are an essential part of professional development and growth. In other words, tensions are an essential and desirable part of new initiatives.

In our case, the significance of tensions was felt in different, layered forms. Time, constraints, documentation, individual subjectivity, and expectations regarding roles were all factors that accounted for tensions. Within each tension, though, there was also a kind of depth to the tension that created an additional dimension to the challenge of implementing this alternative supervision model. Some constraints, such as the requirement to undertake six formal observations, could be molded within the emerging expectations of those involved in this partnership, but they could only be shaped to a degree. Indeed, we came to understand these constraints as a desirable element of an innovative initiative, since without constraint there could quickly be confusion and irritation. Such was the case when the cooperating teachers did not make a move to systematize the expectations regarding lesson plans.

Although this depth of constraint was at first challenging, as time led us into the depth of complexity we began to realize that complexity also meant learning. As Jaques (1985) explains, deep learning occurs as we engage ourselves in sophisticated depths of investigating. Each layer brings new insight but is not without pain. These struggles led to the realization that prior to the implementation of this alternative model, we had all thought it sufficient if a student had a cooperating teacher who was a good teaching model. After the implementation of the alternative model, we concluded that the model relied on a teacher fulfilling more than the cooperating teacher role. Instead, the teacher must be able to fulfill four roles: supervising one’s own student teacher, supervising the other student teacher in the dyad, being a cooperating teacher, and providing input into the professional development school partnership.

The restructuring of supervision also posed a number of tensions for university faculty. One challenge was negotiating the constraints of the university with the creativity of educators. The university, through the college of education’s student teaching office, was accustomed to large-scale placement practices. Student teaching office staff viewed student files, approached school administrators for over 400 placements, and assigned student teachers to schools by sending them a memo. Once assigned, student teachers were supervised by cooperating teachers who may never have received formal supervision training and university supervisors who were often adjuncts. Thus, it was a big stretch for university faculty and staff to (a) work extensively with one school, (b) support cooperating teachers in identifying a way to gather information from prospective student teachers that supported customized placement but did not violate confidentiality obligations, and (c) identify how university faculty could support teachers in training them to supervise student teachers. All of this was undertaken in our case (and is often undertaken) on the backs of junior faculty at the university and teachers at schools. For faculty with significant publication requirements, this work is an onerous task, and for teachers who receive minimal supplemental compensation, there is little incentive other than one’s own obligation to the profession to embark on such a rigorous undertaking. Although this issue has been recognized in the literature (Koppich, 2000), since the promotion and tenure process at each institution is a very localized
practice, this negotiation seems always to be undertaken on a case-by-case basis.

As teacher educators, something that might have assisted us was the use of off-the-shelf supports. What we mean by this is that there may exist a prepackaged training, seminar, or course that we could have employed in lieu of offering an on-site graduate seminar that we had to create from a concept. The benefit of such a prepackaged component would be that participants would not have to invent everything from the syllabus to the evaluation of the course, but the drawback is that things that are prepackaged are often a little too generic to target the focus of the change initiative. As teacher educators, we also think that educators generally are leery of for-profit professional development because it implies a one-shot workshop approach and it is outside the not-for-profit tradition of public schools. Clearly though, there may be for-profit products or services on the market that may offer good value and be supportive to professional development efforts. Thus, it will be up to teacher educators to search for, identify, and evaluate the available products and services to decide what may be useful and under what circumstances they might be employed.

With enhanced collaboration in the restructured model came a significant increase in communication. This may on the surface be seen as helpful, but it also means that all participants—student teachers, teachers, school administrators, university staff and faculty, senior college of education administrators—will hear a lot of criticisms or commentary they had not heard previously, and some of what they hear they will not like. Thus, teacher educators are presented with the paradox of critical emancipation: on the one hand, they want the changes they introduce to support participants in empowering themselves, but on the other hand they do not want the changes to be so forceful or so different that the participants are adrift.

The intersection of the situated-apprentice and the critical perspectives of learning-to-teach may mean that indoctrination into a profession means standing on one’s own feet. For the student teacher who felt that there was no one in his or her corner, for the cooperating teacher/university supervisor who is critiqued by a student teacher, and for the university faculty member who is “discussed” by senior school and university administrators, this feeling of standing on one’s own feet may be liberating, but it also feels much less safe than a traditional approach.

6.2.2. Implications for future research

We have described the nature of tensions that are inherent in this work, and it is these tensions that might be the source of useful future research. What is interesting about the tension construct is that it offers additional nuances beyond that of other descriptors sometimes used in supervision reform such as obstacle or barrier. Tensions offer both possibility and challenge, and by inquiring into the role tension plays in both the failure and success of change, it is possible to obtain valuable insight.

Teacher educators who use a critical position as their stance will need to negotiate the nature of ownership that is experienced by all participants in future research on reform. Faculty members typically propose the supervision model and pose the research questions. But if they claim to support participants in finding their own voices through research, should they not be posing the research questions? If they do any less than offer resources by which the participants conduct their own research, have they not just merely subjugated their collaborators as subjects to their own design? We do not suggest these as yes-or-no questions but rather as prompts to support our thinking when teacher educators dwell in the limbo of multiple tensions pulling in multiple directions. As Adrian has proposed:

Teacher ownership dramatically changes the way teacher education can be represented. In the future, teams of teachers and researchers will need to study what happens when they mutually construct research questions, when they overlap teaching and researching responsibilities, and when they consider multiple ways of representing data. (Rodgers, 2002, p.156).

What will be most significant about this work is that as educators, both teachers and faculty will be able to wrestle with their own demons to obtain new insight. For example, university faculty may be comfortable and somewhat inured to negotiating the tension between commitment to the profession and nurturing student teachers, but for the cooperating teachers/university supervisors in this study, this was a new dilemma. If teacher educators support their own inquiry into this tension, new insight might be obtained.

While teacher educators may undertake considerable work into thinking about the role of tensions in their work with teachers, they will also need to think about the issues they typically believe are beyond
their control in working with teachers. For example, in this redesign effort there was, at one point, a belief we should abandon grades entirely for the student teaching experience in favor of reference letters that could more precisely articulate a student teacher’s abilities. This notion was abandoned when university administrators pointed out grades using the A–B–C system were required for this experience and change to a different grading system would require faculty approval. Thus, the larger issue is how do those engaged in reform negotiate constraints beyond their control when the constraints maintain the status quo?

Thinking about how teacher educators move initial teacher preparation beyond where it is now is a critical component of future teacher education research. Colleges of education are adept at establishing procedures, checklists, and prerequisites, and it is difficult to alter these protocols. It is no surprise that colleges seldom restructure. Given the difficulty with which change is accomplished, it may be helpful to consider what new off-the-shelf products are available for professional developers and how these products are useful. More importantly, can teacher educators develop new products or procedures that may be taken to scale, or are they destined to undertake such contextualized work that they really do need to reinvent initiatives aimed at change every time? Even if teacher educators decided they must start fresh with each initiative, are there some published supports that could be used to scaffold their own initial, and often fledgling, efforts? Finally, how can teacher educators research, using multiple methods and multiple sites, the usefulness of these products or procedures? This latter question is related of course to the issue of how teacher educators take concepts, products, and processes to scale in teacher preparation. For example, we recently shared the paired-dyad approach at a professional conference (Keil & Rodgers, 2005), and we are sharing the research we undertook in this academic journal. While fellow teacher educators may choose to use the approach, a systematic way to inquire into, document, and report across multiple sites by multiple researchers on this or any other teacher education initiatives remains illusive.

While traction may be gained in reform efforts with the assistance of products, services, or protocols, what is most important is researching the needs of all participants. Teacher educators need to consider where reform work fits into teaching, research, and service. They need to resolve how the work of field-intensive faculty may be equitable with faculty who are less field-intensive. Most importantly, since publication typically has value at all institutions, while the weight and type of teaching and service valued at institutions differs, we must carefully consider how redesign efforts can yield publishable research. Even more importantly, we must not forget about the ultimate participant for whom we conduct our work: the student. It is difficult for teacher educators to create research designs that link what they do with student learning. Indeed, in this study the participants were so anxious to move on with the initiative that it took parents to call and ask about the wisdom of having their child taught by as many as four student teachers. Thus, the difficulty for teacher educators is creating designs that support taking initiatives to scale so that they can create potent preservice and in-service teacher preparation, while at the same time linking the initiatives to impact on student learning.

6.3. Limitations

One of the benefits of some forms of research is that it is often generalizable to other circumstances. This claim cannot be made about the type of qualitative research that we have undertaken. Although the findings are not generalizable to a wider population, our case study approach offers a rich depiction of what occurs when reforms are implemented in a school context. Indeed, one of the strengths of case studies is that they describe not only the particular case being investigated, but they also add to an understanding of similar cases (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Thus, the strength of our study lies not in its generalizability, but in its contribution to understanding similar cases that may prove useful in understanding how professionals respond from the bottom-up to top-down reform mandates. We could add further to this body of knowledge by looking at how our restructured model evolves over time, and this will be the subject of another article.

The present study offers a 4-month snapshot of what occurred with one strand of a larger multiyear professional development school initiative. It describes one college of education at a large university in the United States, one higher socioeconomic-status school, and the participants working or studying at both. The contribution of the research
lies in its proposal of an alternative supervision model that might be used in other settings and its discussion of tensions that act as a suitable caveat for other teacher educators. Another important limitation to the study is that the analyses of data are focused by the theoretical lens. Had we used any one of a number of different lenses such as reform, mentoring, or professional development, we would have had different views.

7. Conclusion

Continued exploration of new methods of supervising student teachers is essential. As we seek more potent ways to prepare teachers, PreK-16 partnerships provide one opportunity to develop, test, refine, and inform the practice of supervising and mentoring student teachers in potent ways that situate schools and colleges of education along with teachers and university faculty as the nexus of reform. Importantly, professional development school sites allow bottom-up change to occur within the supports of a top-down initiative. Because bottom-up change puts a lot of freight on the individuals involved, revising past practices using collaborative reform is difficult to begin, difficult to sustain, and risky for the participants to complete whilst still sustaining the consensus of the group. Utmost caution is essential. Nevertheless, there are many rewards to be unearthed in the conversations between the different stakeholders that provide the opportunity for traditional supervision to become renewed through collaborative professional efforts. Although collaborative restructuring is complex on multiple levels, it also can act as a powerful medium for change.

References


