Using Self-study to develop a third space for collaborative supervision of master‘s projects in teacher education

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The study was conducted at the School of Education University of Iceland

The study is supported by the University of Iceland Research Fund

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Teacher education is constantly being renewed in response to continuous social, economic and technological changes. In Iceland in 2008, teacher education was extended from a three-year to a five-year master's degree. This significantly increased the number of students at the master's level. To respond to these changes, we, three university-based teacher educators, organized collaborative supervisory meetings for 18 master's students during the school years 2012-2014. We used self-study to understand our progress and inspire our development as supervisors. The goal was to gain a better understanding of how we learn together in collaborative supervision and to develop, adapt, and change our teaching and learning practices. Data consisted of reflective notes and journals, recordings of students' and supervisors' meetings, e-mails, tickets out of class, and material from Moodle. Constant analysis of data was conducted with personal reflection and collective discussion and using theories to scrutinize data. Our findings show that working on supervisory issues together, we expanded our resources, strengthened our collaboration and trust, developed our professional identities, and improved our collective supervisory efficacy. We discovered that self-study provided an "in-between" space for us to explore cultures, roles, and visions, as we collaboratively contested, defined and recreated our roles as supervisors.

Keywords: Collaborative supervision; self study; master's projects; third space; learning community; core reflection.

Supervising master's students [1]

To respond to continuous societal changes, teacher education is constantly being renewed. As a guideline for these changes, many countries have identified quality teachers as those having pedagogical and subject area content knowledge, skills and attitudes for successful teaching, understanding of human growth and child

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development, effective communication skills, a strong sense of ethics, and capacity for lifelong learning (Cobb, Darling-Hammond, & Murangi, 1995; European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012). To prepare teachers to realize these qualities and to professionalize teaching, educators and change agents have sought to lengthen teacher education or situate it at the graduate level (Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1995). In 2008, teacher education in Iceland was extended from a three-year bachelor's degree to a five-year master's degree. This means that in the years to come, the number of student teachers graduating from the School of Education at the University of Iceland with a master's degree will increase significantly, and the population of master's students will be different. Although master's programs have been offered for almost 20 years for teachers and administrators, these have been intended for experienced professionals rather than preservice teachers. In addition, only a fraction of teachers have used this opportunity to continue their learning. From now on, all student teachers must finish a master's degree to receive certification as teachers. The extended teacher education program called for a revision with new courses and criteria for completion. The revised learning outcomes call for student teachers to have knowledge of the main research methods in the field of pedagogy and educational studies, skills to use theoretical knowledge and research outcomes, and competencies to take active part in the process of professional discourse. In the final year, each student is expected to complete a master's thesis demonstrating "the ability, skills and initiative to gather data … and analyse and evaluate the data according to accepted practices and research methods in the respective field" (Kennsluskrá, 2014). To meet these parameters students work on a research or a developmental project where they use research methods to gain profound knowledge and understanding of a specific phenomena. The project is 30 ECTS and generally lasts over one academic year.

As a response to the changes described above, we – Hafdís, Karen and Svanborg organized collaborative supervisory meetings (CSM) for 18 master's students during the school years 2012-2014. Becoming a supervisor of master's projects in teacher education is an important part of the teacher educator's role. Collective meetings of master's students have been offered at the university, but they are usually intended to introduce and discuss master's projects. While we think such meetings are useful, we wanted to create a learning community based on students' questions, understandings and doings to facilitate the process of master's projects. In so doing we also created our professional community through collaboration. As a part of our practice with CSM, we used self-study methodology to better understand our progress and inspire our development as supervisors.

The purpose of this article is to show how self-study can open up a third space for teacher educators to develop an understanding of their professional identities affording agency to influence change. The goal of the research was to gain knowledge and understanding of how we learn together in collaborative supervision of master's students, and to use the research results to develop, adapt, and change our teaching and learning practices.

Helping us understand more than the obvious

Teacher education researchers are calling for a more holistic view of teaching in general and teacher education in particular, exploring how teachers and teacher educators can use their inner potential and resources to create the ideal teaching situations for their students to flourish (Korthagen, 2004, 2010; Korthagen & Kessell, 1999; Korthagen, Kim & Greene, 2013; Rodriguez, 2007; Palmer, 1998). We draw on Rodriguez's (2007) understanding of resources as personal qualities and strengths that emerge from and influence life experiences and come to play in practice.

The ideas of the realistic approach (RA) (Korthagen & Kessel, 1999) and the core reflection approach (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005; Korthagen et al., 2013) suggest that there is a need to turn traditional teacher education models (application-of-theory) "upside down." This involves focusing first on the experiences and questions student teachers bring and gain through their teacher education programs, and helping them see the interplay between their experiences and academic theories (Guðjónsdóttir et al., 2007; Korthagen et al., 2013; Korthagen & Kessel, 1999; Pinneger & Hamilton, 2010). As teacher educators, we acknowledge that theory can help teachers understand their practice. The master's projects are a test of how they are able to intertwine these in a constructive way, most commonly as research projects. This, however, is a challenge, with many students experiencing writing the theoretical part of their thesis as mandatory "doing time" they must endure in order to get their degree.

Our intent in the CSM was to develop a learning community that allowed us to understand how conducting a master's thesis can provide an opportunity for both student teachers and supervisors to understand themselves and their practice more holistically, to understand who they are and how the work of others can help them develop the selves they want to enact in their practice (Korthagen, 2011).

The concept of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and the idea of third space (Bhabha, 2004) are helpful in understanding our process of developing a learning community. The central idea of LPP is that learning is a situated activity in which learners are guided toward a mastery of knowledge and skills of particular sociocultural communities of practice through participation with someone more knowledgeable (Lave & Wenger, 1991). At the heart of this concept is membership in a social community where learning takes place. We look at our collaboration as peripheral participation within a learning community of becoming

supervisors of master's students. In our context, this participation involved using and reflecting on our resources to create a learning community for master's students for working on their theses. We created a learning community for our students and ourselves by using self-study to develop our identities as supervisors. Approaching our collaboaration with an open mind and curiosity, we created a space where we encouraged each other to utilize our personal and professional experience, knowledge and beliefs. In a hybrid or "third" space, the development of identity and community is realized through language or expression, where the uniqueness of each person, actor, or context is seen as a "hybrid" (Bhabha, 2004; Wenger, 2008). Third space theory is concerned with the constitutive role of culture in mind, that is, how mind develops by incorporating the community's shared artifacts accumulated over generations (Vygotsky, 1987).

Third space is not only a space in time and place; it is also a mode of articulation, a way of describing not merely reflective but productive space that produces new possibilities (Meredith, 1998), sometimes for shifting and negotiating roles (Taylor, Klein, & Abrams, 2014). It offers an opportunity to question established categorizations of culture and identity (Meredith, 1998; Bhabha, 2004) in which roles and identities can be renegotiated and reconstructed (Taylor et al., 2014). Such a space is important for getting to know ourselves as professionals and for supporting each other in the educational community, as these are vital to our growth and productivity (Newberry, 2014). As the research progressed, we became aware of the third space in our collaboration and how it increased our capabilities to negotiate our roles in the learning community of supervising master's students (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

To better understand our practice and development as supervisors, we link together the theoretical concepts of LPP and third space with the methodology of self-

study of teacher education practices. Two points are critical for self-study. One is that the researcher has an ontological sense for her stance in the professional world; the other essential element is the use of dialogue in the process of coming to know and understand the practice (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2010). Self-study as research methodology is a way for practioners to reflect critically on their practice. It is about insiders understanding what they do, how they do it, and how they can improve it (Samaras, Guðjónsdóttir, McMurrer, & Dalmau, 2012). To understand their practice more deeply and to support their interpretation, self-study practioners use the voices of others in their practice as they can provide the evidence for their claims (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2010).

To be leaders of change and to play a part in transforming teacher education calls for well-informed participants who understand the initiative of the teacher education institution as well as their professional positions. Collaborative self-study of shared teaching and learning experiences can help draw out the complex thinking, decision making, and pedagogical rationale that supports the professional work of teacher educators (Loughran, 2004). It can support them in analyzing their visions, values, and beliefs and help them gain an understanding of their professional identities (Dalmau & Guðjónsdóttir, 2002; Loughran, 2014). In developing a learning community we utilize our differences in knowledge, experience and beliefs to negotiate our ever-changing identities and roles as collaborative self-study researchers. In collaborative self-study it is critical to know how to differ professionally, passionately, and constructively (Bodone, Guðjónsdóttir, & Dalmau, 2004; Samaras, 2011). While it is important to draw on the unique characteristics of each researcher and the conflicts emerging in the self-study community, it is important to be aware that tensions can also silence voices and outlaw sensitive topics (Bodone et al., 2004; Samaras, 2011). Doing

self-study of own practice and publishing it can strengthen professional development. It can recognize the work of the professional, but it can also play a part in purposefully developed teacher education.

Research design

Self-study of teacher education practice is a qualitative research methodology and a theoretical framework for researching one's own practice, ethos, and values (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2010; Samaras, 2011), informed by teacher education reform built on data and research findings (Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). The researcher is the resource and topic of the research, ontologically transforming herself and her practice (Samaras et al., 2012).

This study looks at how we developed a learning space for 18 master's students to come together and support each other in meetings held every three weeks for two hours, organized around brief instructions, introductions of student projects, and group work. Each of us was responsible for supervising five to seven individual students, but at the meetings we responded equally to all of them. Attendance was not obligatory and we were not paid for these meetings. Our goal was to facilitate, guide, and encourage.

Alongside the student learning community, we organized our own supervisor meetings between student meetings. At first they were mainly practical, but gradually, and as we gathered more data, they developed into reflective and analytical meetings. We also organized separate meetings concerning analysis of data.

We sought to establish and sustain a learning community that would allow students to construct their identities as research-focused practitioners and to pursue an understanding of the interplay between theory and practice. Further, we attempted to generate research results that could improve learning and teaching. Our intention was to build a bridge between theory and practice, and strengthen our teaching as we supported

master's students in writing their theses (Berry & Crowe, 2010; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2004).

The following questions guided our work:

- What characterizes the development of our collective efficacy and professional identity in the process of creating a community of collaborative supervision?
- How can we as supervisors draw on collective resources in our learning community to help students become reflective and research-focused teachers?

Participants

The students are a mix of practicing teachers and student teachers. The three teacher educators are Hafdís, Svanborg, and Karen. Hafdís has 13 years of experience in university teaching and 27 years of experience in compulsory school teaching, specializing in inclusive education and self-study of practices. Svanborg is a new lecturer with 28 years of experience teaching at compulsory school level and ten years' university teaching focused on innovation education. She specializes in qualitative research. Karen is a new lecturer at the university, with five years of experience teaching deaf learners at the compulsory school level. She specializes in teacher research.

Data collection and analysis

Data consisted of reflective notes, recordings of meetings, e-mails, tickets out of class (TOCs), and material from Moodle (the online class environment). Data and analysis included:

(1) TOCs: At the end of each meeting, students were asked what they had learned and what they would like to focus on. Tickets were collected and written up after

each CSM, and we read and discussed them, responding to students at the next meeting.

(2) Researchers' journals:

   (a) Reflective notes: All researchers recorded personal notes.

   (b) Fieldnotes from students' meetings: Each researcher jotted notes in her research journal about what was happening in meetings and about communication among students and between students and supervisors.

   (c) E-mails: Conversations and thoughts sent between researchers to reflect on potential responses to matters that came up. E-mails about student supervision, their progress, plans of meetings, and ideas were collected.

(3) Minutes from preparation meetings: We met to prepare student meetings (CSM) for 1-1 ½ hours. Analytical discussions and reflections took place as well. We listened to and transcribed the recordings of these meetings.

(4) Formal analysis meetings (AM): We organized longer meetings (2-8 hours) to discuss data, emerging findings, and theories. Each researcher prepared notes beforehand with points of interest and emerging themes. Recordings, notes, individual reflections, and discussions in preparation meetings were analyzed.

We held our preparation meetings before almost every CSM to organize student meetings; occasionally we did this via e-mail. These meetings gradually turned into reflective analytical meetings and often were a messy mix of planning and analyzing. As our data grew, we organized special analytical meetings as well. In those meetings we discussed student progress and reflected on the CSM, looking into the TOCs, and analyzed what was happening with the students and ourselves.

We each read and reread the various data sets during analysis, focusing on moments where we responded to challenges to understand how we arranged the

resources around us to develop our learning community. Next we compared and discussed these moments within the context of the study (Wolcott, 2008), focusing on our reaction to students' work, questions, requests, and emerging needs in the next meetings. Since the analysis was ongoing, we reframed the challenges that appeared and sought to understand how both we and our students could make use of the diverse resources available.

The process of analysis was conducted by regularly reading, listening to recordings of data and discussing emerging issues and understandings. At critical points we gathered the data we had, produced rough analysis memos, and discussed them. It was a cyclical, iterative and interactive, and sometimes messy, process. Thus the different data were either regularly or occasionally consulted, gradually drawing out issues and challenges reflected in our own professional theories and big T-theories (Korthagen & Kessel, 1999). Reflection became more persistently focused on our own professional theories in the latter phases of analysis.

Inspired by Korthagen and Kessel's (1999) realistic approach in the meetings, we gradually started to use their ideas to scrutinize data in order to understand the learning trajectories of the students. We looked for indicators of their journeys from being technicians (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2004) towards becoming reflective professionals using theories and research to enhance their practice. We also used the RA ideas to examine how we as supervisors in our collaborative endeavors drew on our own tacit knowledge, connected it to theories, and looked for how this emerged in our practice.

We used LPP and Third Space Theory as a conceptual framework and analytical tools to examine our data. Constantly scrutinizing our data enabled us to improve the learning environment that we had created. We used those frameworks to ask how

participation helped students become reflective and cognizant specialists. Moreover, we explored our learning environment as supervisors, our participation in becoming educators, and how augmented value was generated through our collaboration. We acknowledged that identity development should not occur in isolation, but through communication and collaboration (McAnulty & Cuenca, 2014). We wanted to design a learning community building on collaborative meaning-making as we strived to integrate academic and practitioner knowledge (Taylor et al., 2014).

The trustworthiness of this study is founded on systematically collecting data, questioning colleagues, articulating motivation, making visible the process of reframing practice (from supervising alone to collective supervisory efficacy), and ongoing reflection and evaluation of our own practice and students' trajectories (Samaras, 2011).

Creating and developing a learning community

In this section we report on our development as supervisors through creating a learning community for master's students and ourselves. Through self-study we recognized our professional identities and how we understand and develop them in collaboration with others. Five main themes emerged in our data: *Learning communities, drawing on collective resources, collaboration, reflection in practice*, and finally *trust and collective vision*. As we analyzed our data we realized that our collaboration helped us develop important supervisory issues, such as time awareness, the challenge of understanding and connecting practice and theories, and choosing appropriate methodology. By working on these issues together we utilized and expanded our resources and enhanced and strengthened our collaboration. Using self-study and reflection, our collective assets ignited ideas that helped to support our students, and which we put into practice in the CSMs. We realized that our collaboration depended upon reciprocal trust, and allowed our collective visions to emerge.

Learning community

The basis of our work was the CSMs, along with our reflective preparation meetings (RPM). CSMs soon took on a specific form that we designed around students' needs and the requirements of the master's projects. Average attendance at the CSMs was 14 students.

The CSMs gradually developed roughly into three main parts. The first part was our own input about practical matters and different knowledge the students required. The second part consisted of two or three short formal presentations of students' projects and discussions with the whole group. The third part, which we considered very important, was a period of small group work or informal workshop working on issues students had pointed out, or issues with which we saw them struggling. At every meeting we had coffee and tea, and students took turns bringing cake and biscuits. The refreshments were intended to make the atmosphere more relaxed and to provide students with extra energy late in the day. The topics of the mini-lessons were determined according to students' requests and to the issues we saw as relevant for their progress. During the small group work, we walked around, listened in on students' conversations, participated in the discussions, asked questions, and came up with suggestions.

We attended nearly all CSMs, taking turns in preparing and presenting ten-minute mini-lessons about different issues of research and writing. In the mini-lessons the other two commented and reflected on the input. The pedagogy thus often developed dialogically. At the end of each meeting students gave anonymous responses on TOCs detailing what they had learned and what they wished to learn more about. We organized the meetings jointly as a response to TOCs from students and discussed the process at our RPMs. As the time was limited and we had a tough schedule to keep, we

started keeping track of time and alerting those holding the floor. Svanborg described a typical meeting in her journal:

> We gathered in a large room with 14 students. The tables were arranged in a big U open towards the screen where the PPT was projected. In the back there is a table with a tablecloth, lit candles, cups, coffee, tea and a spread of cakes, fruit and cheeses. I stood by the computer and gave a short presentation on working with qualitative data. Towards the end of my presentation Hafdís, sitting at the side with the students, added an example and Karen responded with her understanding. The students started to raise their hands, asking questions.

After this meeting, the students wrote in the TOCs that they had appreciated the presentation and examples of how to work with data. Several of them asked for more of the same for the next meeting. At our next preparation meeting, we discussed how we would respond to those requests:

> On the one hand we had expected the students to be more versed in research methods, but Hafdís pointed out that this was the reality and we needed to respond accordingly. We decided that next time we would give them more examples of working with data but also have them bring their own work, at whatever stage, so they could practice coding, finding themes, and writing up stories. Karen suggested they write short pieces from their data and share them in small groups. Svanborg drew up the time frame for the meeting so all three main parts could be covered within the two-hour limit. (RPM, February 2013)

This description touches on how we drew on our different strengths and emphases to continuously negotiate the learning community with our master's students that allowed them to construct their identities as research-focused practitioners. Hafdís focused on the needs of students, and rather than complain about their lack of preparation, wanted us to consider effective responses. Karen suggested a constructive response involving writing (her specialty), and Svanborg designed the time-frame so that the elements would not flow freely and exclude one or the other.

Drawing on each other's resources

While we were aware of some of our inner potentials as practitioners, we were still unaware of how they would play out in our learning community. As our meetings unfolded we became more aware of how our shared resources could bolster each other's weaknesses. Before the first meeting, Karen wrote in her journal:

> I wonder about my ability to get inside students' projects and to ask questions that can help students expand their thoughts and ideas. It is just the thought of taking on the role of supervisor and leading master's students through the process I went through as a student. I found the idea of helping students develop a manageable research idea and frame their research challenging.

During the first meeting with students, Hafdís talked the students through the research process, emphasizing the need for signposts and the importance of beginning work immediately. After the meeting, Karen wrote in her research journal about how good she felt during this first meeting and how the idea of LPP kept coming to mind. She felt like she was taking on the role of the supervisor, and that she was not alone in that process. The benefit Karen saw in the collaboration was that she did not have to know everything about the process before taking on master's students. She was becoming a supervisor in a community where she would sometimes take the lead and set up the environment for students' work, but at other times she could sit back and learn from her colleagues.

Time awareness

Over and over we encountered the issue of time. The external time frame of the master's projects and the internal time frame of the CSMs kept arising. Repeatedly we faced the need to increase students' awareness of the time it takes to actually work on the master's thesis. The external time frame from the university is divided into two

terms, the first of which spent working on the research proposal, the second collecting data and writing the thesis. Through our experience we learned that the time given to finish the thesis in one term is not sufficient.

We adopted multiple strategies in response. First, we talked explicitly at the CSMs throughout the whole research process about the importance of writing. Second, we encouraged students to develop precise schedules for their projects. Third, we provided time to discuss various parts of their projects, followed by individual time for recording the thoughts these discussions evoked. These activities were implemented for students to take something written out of our meetings that encouraged them to continue their work on their own.

Discussing these short- and long-term time pressures, we found that they often challenged our goals of supporting students to become independent and empowered professionals. At CSMs this sometimes resulted in truncating time slots we arranged for independent student work or small group work. At times the structure we provided at the meetings was not enough. Hafdís and Karen said at analytical meetings that we were becoming "clock women" and that they did not like it (AM, May 2014). However, as Hafdís described:

> When we taught the other day we didn't set the timer and I became very nervous about time. I had asked the students to give a short account of their situation in doing their thesis. It took such a long time to give everyone the opportunity for their account. In my head I thought it would take them a minute or two and they would use one or two sentences to describe their situation. I kept sneaking looks at my watch, hoping no one noticed. But I completely lost the control and this was taking too much time, I was dripping with sweat, wondering how to get them to focus and make it short. At this time I realized I missed the timer and that using it helps keep the time in a nice way. (AM, May 2014)

Our collaboration emphasized the importance of reminding students as well as ourselves

of the time frame within which students were to complete their work, and also of keeping time at the meetings. By repeatedly discussing this issue in our analytical meetings we produced possibilities to use time in a more productive way. However this is an ever-evolving issue, where the competing pull of educating students with input from us (as students call for in TOCs) draws us away from what we intend: letting them work to genuinely construct their own identities as research-focused and reflective teachers.

Collaboration

Students found working with data challenging, and some of them were hesitant in choosing research methods. Here, our different research experiences became a good resource for the learning community, and provided an opportunity to expand our collaboration. At one CSM we experienced a constructive interplay of our different working habits that was partially planned and partially serendipitous:

> Before one of the meetings Svanborg prepared a mini-presentation of how she works with a large set of data by using tables to organize issues and emerging themes before starting to write up findings. During the presentation Karen realized that her ways of approaching data were quite different. As Svanborg was getting close to finishing her presentation Karen intervened, explaining how she would have started the analysis process by writing stories from the data. The students looked confused. (Authors' journals, February 2013)

By intervening into Svanborg's presentation Karen opened up a third space within the classroom in which different approaches to analysing data were colliding. Svanborg experienced a little tension, but because of the trust that had developed she allowed it to stay in the air. In observing the situation Hafdís experienced the confusion that was developing within the space between us and students. She wondered how to help students organize the chaos of the data and make sense of it. Surprising herself and

everyone else, she grabbed a basket full of small bits of textiles sitting next to her, poured them on the table, and asked:

> "What do we see, how can we make sense of this, how can we group these bits and pieces? What can come out of this?" This interplay of explaining seemed to lighten their eyes, and we all began to move the bits of textiles around, discussing how this could be sorted, grouped, rearranged, imagining these bits were our data. (Authors' journals, February 2013)

The dynamic interplay rising within the CSMs allowed us to problematize and create opportunities in the living moment. These moments planted seeds within our professional development that allowed us to expand our vision of the different pathways we as supervisors could take to create a learning community that supported students through the research process.

We saw early on that students struggled with using theory. We used our resources to design learning scenarios for our students where they would experience the power of theory for their research and practice. We found that discussing different aspects of the writing process helped us respond to students' challenges:

> I am frustrated by how Anna's writing falls short of fulfilling academic standards and how far she is from seeing the importance of the theoretical chapter to the practical part of her research in the research proposal. (Svanborg's journal, January 2013)

By having a space to air concerns at preparation meetings we as a group could make sense of and respond to them in a constructive way. In working through Svanborg's frustrations, Hafdís suggested that we work with students in the next CSM, discussing how theories can be both a foundation for practice (and research) and "lenses" to look at data.

> I was relieved that we decided to use students' own experiences of practice as students or teachers and of the practices they were researching to reflect on and discuss at the meeting. We would then ask them about theories that might help them understand what was happening. This decision helped me to move from frustration to construction and action in helping Anna and the other students in our group. (Svanborg's journal, January 2013)

In discussing Svanborg's frustration we used the experience to create more possibilities to help students connect theory to practice in a meaningful way. The trust and the reflective space encouraged Svanborg to articulate her feelings and gave us the opportunity to grow as supervisors.

Reflecting on our practice

By Spring 2014 we realized through our self-study that our collaboration not only opened a space for reflection, but also for producing new and constructive solutions and sometimes shifting and negotiating roles. We had created a *third space* where we could safely question dominant categorizations of culture and identity, support each other, and get to know ourselves as professionals.

At our preparation and analytical meetings we were constantly drawn to the challenges of the students. Scrutinizing our own thinking and actions often led us to discuss how students were doing. This is an understandable "problem," as these processes are deeply intertwined and one is the foundation for the other. At one of the analytical meetings we discussed this tendency and connection:

> Svanborg: Do you notice that we keep discussing the students' work and progress when we want to look into our own development?
> Hafdís: Yes, I know.
> Svanborg: We should focus on finding what other opportunities *we* are getting in this collaboration with the CSMs.

> Hafdís: One of the big opportunities is that we are three, and by identifying that and by telling the stories of students, we can analyze their situation and then our responses. In order to understand the third space we are creating, our collaboration, our strengths, we need the examples of students. We tell stories of those examples and what we learned from them. That is why we over and over draw on examples of students' progress.
> Karen: And those little stories of students we draw on in our discussions, they show our progress, we see through them the whole process. We see through them what we emphasize and how we speak together and interact. We sometimes see different solutions and we air them at our meetings. (AM, June 2014)

To understand whether our responses were constructive, and adhered to our own ethics and visions, we had to analyze our interactions with students, drawing on stories from our practice. We often wondered whether we were forcing academic identities on students who were enthusiastic teachers but did not want to become academic researchers. Karen pondered:

> It is exactly this that I find problematic. These frames, these demands from the University, that may be excluding some groups of people, some minorities. These demands are set by the academy from a masculine, middle-class perspective, and these parameters make it difficult for other groups that express themselves differently to enter this discourse and they consequently feel inadequate. (AM, June 2014)

We discussed what these frames are for, how they are important, and if they ensure quality. We wondered how they could be used creatively and help with deepening understanding of the issues students were examining, and how we could empower them by building on their resources. Acknowledging that these frames were a part of the dominating discourses, marginalizing some of our students, helps us to find ways to negotiate different expressions.

> Hafdís: Among other things we are fighting to make teacher education a bit different for the students in arts and vocational subjects. We want to find ways for those students to make different projects than the traditional ones.
> Karen: We are so much there, with the frames. Our students criticize these institutional influences and the question is how we can expand these discourses – I mean, we introduce the criteria and the frames, the criteria and then students bring on something else and we must allow them to make it *their own* – but we shouldn't use the criteria to judge them.
> Svanborg: my experience in this collaboration is that our big struggle has been what you are describing, that we want to empower – and that is our big goal, to empower them through their master's projects and preferably through the whole master's studies – and this is the final point in their master's studies – but there are these constant conflicts or challenges of the academic demands, "the big T" is always "pulling their teeth out" so that they look at it as "doing time," to deal with this theoretical chapter, whereas *we* see it as a way to empower them – and that is the struggle. (AM, June 2014)

As our discussions and analysis continued, we came closer to finding what kind of ideologies and ethics guided us. Through repeated discussion and reflection, we gradually excavated what was at the core of our beliefs.

> Hafdís: This is very much about identifying that interplay, about how you present the framework and guide without taking agency away from students but use them to empower them. But at the same time we acnowledge their right to self-determination, we don't throw them in the deep end not knowing how to swim. We encourage them to swim in the deep-end but we must give them floaties, that they can hold on to – unless they are utterly drowning; then we pull them out and allow them to send us chapter by chapter and help them out. We never let them be completely alone, but we try to let them tackle it themselves. And this relates to our professional theory and our ethics. Our ethics rest on realising and acknowledging that we have taken on the role of being teachers and that's why we want to guide students to reach their goals. (AM, June 2014)

Our collective beliefs are that students learn best by using their own resources, tackling problems and issues on their terms, learning by doing (learning by writing) and that they

have a wealth of resources that can be used to support each other. We also believe that learning should empower the learners by building on their experience, strengths, and qualities rather than accepting ready knowledge uncritically (AM, June 2014). Discussing the issue of negotiating learner identity and the interplay with the dominant institutional discourses, Karen said:

> When you say that students call for more input and knowledge from us, I find that very interesting because that might just be learned behavior about what it means to learn. They have taken on a certain student identity – as receivers of knowledge. And that the teacher's role is to tell them what to do. We are also talking about collective identities. I find that very exciting, to look into what kind of identities we are thinking about – are we written into specific identities as university teachers that say "you should be like this and this" and we all play along? And what we are doing, we are trying to negotiate these roles – even when we get these messages from our students to give them knowledge from a learning culture we don't believe in.
>
> I think it comes into perspective to acknowledge that there are educational discourses that create social positions for students and teachers. But when you look at your practice you start to see if your institution inscribes your identities and then whether they can be negotiated and recreated.

We recognize that there are social and institutional discourses that create social positions for teachers and students and tacitly control how we think and act. Through self-study we created a third space to listen to student voices and explore the tensions we experienced between their ways of being and the social positions available through the research process. By critically engaging with these tensions our aim was to negotiate and recreate these positions in the spirit of empowering students and ourselves. Our goal is to build our teaching on students' situations and their requests and work from there to a more theoretical perspective. Trying to reconstruct our roles as teacher educators is a precarious endeavor.

Trust and collective vision

Although we experienced early on that the collaboration was helpful, we also entered difficult phases. Welcoming other supervisors into the group in Fall 2013, it soon became clear that some balance was upset and trust and agency were reduced. We decided to continue with only the three of us and focus more on discovering and developing our professional identities.

Our supervisors' community of practice required trust strengthened through the co-construction of the students' practice and interaction in the meetings. Trust was tested when we experienced incidents such as working with data described above, where we broke unprepared into each other's teaching. We believed strongly in our shared professionalism, which could be seen in our respect for our mutual input and division of tasks. We built our collaboration on our common core beliefs in working with critical pedagogy (empowerment) and belief in the strengths of differentiation (our different resources and of our students). This did not come easily, nor was it visible from the outset. We used self-study and critical reflection to scrutinize our actions in the CSMs and make visible the conflicts and tensions between the discourses we were drawn into and the identities and cultures we wanted to create. We also discovered that by using self-study we allowed emotional issues to be expressed in a trusting space, such as feelings of desperation and feeling inadequate in the supervisory role – but also feelings of joy and accomplishment.

As we got to know each other and each other's resources better, we started to trust in each other's strengths, feeling safe even if one of us was not proficient in some part of the supervision.

> Svanborg: I feel safe in supervising Erla and Gudrun even though they are using action research studying their own teaching, as I can rely on Hafdís's and Karen's

> experience and knowledge in these methods. I don't have to know everything and when I feel insecure I trust their resources will support me. (Svanborg's journal, October 2013)

Sometimes we discovered that trust was demonstrated in the CSMs in the moment of communication between us as we worked with students. One incident of reciprocal trust emerged in one of our stories from CSMs:

> Svanborg: Hafdís gave a mini lesson today at the CSM about analysis, finding themes and stories in data that could become answers to research questions. Katrín, one of the students I am supervising, had expressed that she couldn't find any answers to her research question in her data and that she was "lost." I mentioned this briefly to Hafdís before the CSM, but we didn't have a chance to discuss it further. As Hafdís finished her presentation, she asked the students to ask questions, but no one responded. I waited to see if Katrín would ask about her issue, but she didn't. I decided to pretend to be a student and ask Katrín's question. I asked Hafdís: what if I can't find any answers in my data to my research question? I didn't doubt for a moment that Hafdís could answer constructively, she hesitated for a moment and looked at me and smiled – I saw a twinkle in her eye. Then she asked the group how they would address this situation, they were silent – and then Hafdís gave direct answers. I think she knew that I was pretending to be Katrín. Her answer indicated that I as a student should read the data once more and then again, and look for other words that interviewees used indicating the issues I was researching. (Svanborg's journal, February 2013).

Svanborg trusted in Hafdís's resources and ability to respond on the spot, but as we discussed this incident we realized that if Hafdís had been another teacher Svanborg might have offended her, as the intervention might have been as deliberately testing her skills. Hafdís wrote about the same incident in her journal:

> At CSM today I talked about how we can analyze our data, the different ways and perspectives we can approach it. I wanted to get a discussion going but I didn't get any response from the students. The room was quiet until Svanborg began asking questions about what to do when you can't find any answers to your questions in

> the data. At first I was little startled. I knew this came from one of her students, but I didn't expect the question and felt unprepared. I knew that my answer was important, and that I had to encourage the student and not put her down. And now everything was even quieter as I thought of how to respond to the question. To give myself more time to respond I asked the students what they would do. Later on discussing this incident with Svanborg we analyzed it from a different perspective and realized that our behavior reflected the trust and belief we have in each other.

Hafdís never suspected that Svanborg had asked the question to make her look bad. We both thought at the time that it was a relevant and important question, even though it was unexpected and unprepared.

Trust became more grounded as we discovered our collective visions in teaching through our self-study. We also tested our trust as we became increasingly open about our concerns, our experienced failings and irritations, and put these honestly on the table for reflection and creation of creative responses and solutions. The trust we developed, expanded our third space to afford emotions and make the ground fertile for exponentially cultivating our resources in collective supervisory efficacy.

Discussion

The goal of this research was to gain knowledge and understanding of how we learn together in collaborative supervision of master's students, and to use the research results to develop, adapt, and change our teaching and learning practices. The collaboration, trust, and confidentiality that developed with this self-study helped us to dig deeper within a safe space. The concept of third space (Bhabha, 2004) helped us understand how we as supervisors drew on each other's resources to renegotiate roles and identities and make visible tendencies and institutional discourses we wanted to abandon. Our biggest challenge was adhering to our mission to empower students to find their voice in academic work, within a culture that demands tight time frames and pushes towards

traditional ways of teaching and learning.

Throughout the process we tried to turn the theory-practice cycle upside down (RA) (Korthagen and Kessel, 1999) using students' experience and research practice as a foundation of their learning, and to draw on our knowledge of our practice in the CSMs to understand and expand theories. By regularly reflecting on our practice and our ethics and visions, we uncovered the core of our beliefs as people and teachers. Our professional working theory emerged through collaboration and reflection. We wanted to develop identities as emancipatory supervisors supporting different strengths in students. We wanted to create a space for development of voices from marginalized groups of students not feeling up to the challenge of writing a master's thesis, so they could be heard and empowered through this process. We created a learning community that resulted in the development of collective efficacy in supervision that is promising for dealing with the complicated and demanding task of supervising a number of graduate students working towards being masters of their profession.

However, we recognize that there are several hurdles we still need to overcome. Through this research we strengthened ourselves as advocates for change in teacher education. We are not going to give away the advocacy we found – we intend to present our findings and support other constructive notions in the same spirit. The three of us together have more potential to influence change in teacher education than each of us alone.

Our different ways of working, and the wide range of experiences and specialization we brought to the community, turned out to offer students useful ways of approaching their research projects, as well as contributing to our own professional learning. We now see our professional identities as being collective rather than isolated. We deepened our understanding of our professional theories and acknowledged the

inescapable struggles, both ours and our students' -- and helped each other keep sight of the core of our pedagogy. As three individual supervisors working collaboratively, our competence to supervise master's students grew, creating communities of practice that did more than collectively add numbers; instead they multiplied resources and knowledge. We enriched and strengthened our collective supervisory efficacy through collaboration and self-study.

Most obviously, our collaboration eliminated isolation in the supervisory process by sharing burdens: concerns, worries, critiques, and workload. The collaboration was stimulating and motivating, as we could confer and depend on each other to generate ideas and solutions. Without the reflective focus of self-study, our work would have been more technical, producing simple responses. Self-study created a third space for emotional self-exploration and a safe space for developing trust. This space became a platform for us to draw lessons from the emotional struggles we encountered to respond constructively to similar situations.

Conclusions

We live and work within cultures that tacitly control our roles and responses without us noticing. By creating a third space to work within, a space that is located one way or another on the border of cultures or between cultures, we can break out of these controls or use them creatively. The third space we developed was created in the intersection of the discourse of our establishment as rule givers (the dominant) and the discourse of the student role as recipients (the dominated) versus actors and creators of relevant knowledge. Self-study in our case provided an "in-between" space (Bhabha, 2004) to explore cultures, roles and visions, as we collaboratively contested, defined and recreated our roles as supervisors. Trust turned out to be key to expanding the third

space and developing and multiplying our resources.

Acknowledgements

We want to thank the reviewers for encouraging and constructive comments.

Funding

We thank the University of Iceland Research Fund for supporting this research.

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