

Linda: A Case Study in Clinical Supervision*

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This case study describes the progressive development of a beginning teacher over a three-month period and illustrates three vital aspects of the clinical supervisory process: the nature of respect for and development of the teacher's autonomy; the use of evidence in the supervisory process; and the way in which the process depends on context and historical continuity. The study provides an instance of clinical supervision which can serve as a focus for discussion about supervisory strategy, structure, and philosophy.

Cette étude de cas, qui décrit le cheminement d'un nouvel enseignant pendant une période de trois mois, illustre trois aspects fondamentaux du processus de supervision clinique: le type de respect accordé à l'autonomie de l'enseignant et à l'évolution de cette même autonomie; l'utilisation de l'évidence dans le processus de supervision; et la façon dont le processus dépend du contexte et d'une certaine continuité historique. Le cas de supervision clinique présenté dans cette étude peut servir de base à toutes discussions portant sur la stratégie, la structure et la philosophie de ce type de supervision.

INTRODUCTION

As school systems continue to deal with problems of in-service development increasing attention is being paid to *clinical supervision*. The term at least is one which is more frequently bantered about in discussions concerning in-service training. It is becoming apparent, however, that there is some degree of confusion as to what clinical supervision entails, what its essential features are, and what the process looks like when implemented. While there are probably a number of reasons for the confusion, I shall focus on two. Both relate to the manner in which the existing literature on clinical supervision has communicated the process.¹

One source of confusion relates to the fact that in articulating supervisory strategies writers typically hedge their remarks with qualifiers indicating, for example, that sometimes strategy *X* is appropriate, while other times it is not; or, the advantages of strategy *Y* are such and such but, on the other hand, the disadvantages are so and so. The function of this kind of hedging, of course, is to communicate that the very nature of the clinical supervisory process is such that the strategies to be used and the way in which they are used depend upon the particular circumstances surrounding any given supervisory situation. All the same, in the absence of hard and fast rules governing the process it could easily be thought that

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whenever there is hedging, then it doesn't make any difference whether you use this or that strategy or use it in this or that way. The thought is wrong, of course, but it does provoke the general question of when or under what circumstances supervision may correctly be called *clinical*. One thing seems certain. There are features of the clinical process which cannot be absent without violating its spirit. I suggest, however, that articulating those features and detecting them in practice will depend largely on the wisdom gained from studying specific cases of clinical supervision since it is specific instances of clinical practice, complete with historical background, that give life and meaning to the process.

This brings me to the second source of confusion in discussions about clinical supervision and to the main task of this paper. At present in the literature there are very few case studies of clinical supervision which can serve as a focus for discussion about the process. To be sure there are selected examples of supervisory interaction which are used to illustrate various aspects of strategy and Goldhammer's (1969) work presents three thoughtfully analyzed case studies. But even these cases are segments extracted from more historically complete cases of supervision. In short, there is little to which practitioners and theorists can turn in order to have an idea of what the clinical supervisory process looks like over time. This is an unfortunate situation simply because a considerable amount of the spirit of clinical supervision is embodied in a concept of historical and contextual continuity.

The present case study is offered as one example of clinical supervision over a relatively long period of time. Data for the study were collected over three months in the second semester of the teacher's first year of teaching. In all, 14 sessions were held with the teacher including four classroom observations. The sessions, except observations, averaged about one-and-one-quarter hours each. All but three sessions were tape recorded and transcribed which resulted in roughly 80 pages of raw data. While in the body of the account I try to give reasons for the supervisory moves made, it should be clear that my task is not to elaborate all of the features of clinical supervision, a task addressed by the authors cited. Nevertheless, it will be helpful for a reader to have some backing for the reasons I do provide in order to see that they are grounded in the philosophy, structure, and strategy of the process and to anticipate aspects of the case study.

In my judgment, at least three features are vital to the spirit of clinical supervision – autonomy, evidence, and continuity. How these features are manifested will naturally vary from case to case and their brief mention here should not be taken as playing down other, perhaps equally vital, features of the process. They are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for clinical supervision.

Respect for the teacher's autonomy recognizes that one of the primary goals of clinical supervision is for the teacher to become more capable in

analyzing and controlling his/her own teaching behaviour. In other words, the clinical process should work toward developing abilities to function autonomously so that teachers can be "self-supervising." In the following case study, for example, at one point in particular, I make a deliberate effort to place responsibility for analysis and alternative teaching strategies on the teacher. Consistent with respect for and development of autonomy is the collegial relationship between the teacher and supervisor. In keeping with this relationship, the supervisor's role is to provide critical and supportive feedback which in itself is open to mutual examination. (This is distinct from a role in which the supervisor prescribes practice for the teacher to follow.)

A second critical feature of the process is its rational and evidential base. Actions taken by the teacher and supervisor alike are meant to be in light of evidence which emerges from an analysis of actual instances of the teacher's performance. In clinical supervision the evidence is in terms of repeated *patterns* which relate to the teacher's intentions and student consequences. As will be seen in the case study, a concerted effort was made to deal with concrete patterns from the lesson transcripts.

A third critical feature of the process is its historical and contextual continuity. Any particular point in the process needs to honour the context of events leading to that point. The problems and issues to be dealt with by the teacher and supervisor arise from the network of particulars which form the context. If the process is seen as a development of and respect for the teacher's autonomy then careful attention to the particulars of a given situation is necessary. This not only suggests that the supervisory process be relatively long term, but also that the supervisor spend considerable time becoming aware of the nature of the context which makes a given teacher's situation unique. The following case study is presented according to its historical sequence in order to show how events at any given time were influenced by prior context.

BEGINNING

Linda (age 23) majored in mathematics and minored in science before teacher training. This was her first teaching position and her schedule included four biology and two computer-science classes. She volunteered to work with me through her department head who was enrolled in one of my courses. Linda obviously was enthusiastic about her work and had become actively involved in the cooperative planning of the courses in the science department, designed her own computer-science course and supervised the Math Club.

Linda and I met informally on three separate occasions at the very beginning. These early discussions gave me the opportunity to explain the process of clinical supervision, and what I anticipated would be the nature of our work together as well as providing the time for us to develop

some degree of rapport. I asked Linda a number of questions concerning her teaching, teaching in general, the school, the students, the community, and so on. Her responses allowed me to begin developing a picture of Linda's teaching life, *as she saw it*, in order to provide a context for our work. Several broad categories emerged which helped shape our subsequent interactions: teaching style, discipline, and the character of the students.²

Teaching style

Teacher: I try to use a lot of questioning which I learned in teacher training. They really stress this. I've tried it both ways. If I stand there and lecture to them, nothing goes in They're not interested and I don't blame them. It's hard to pay attention to someone who's talking about something that you're really not interested in to begin with. So I try to develop a question and answer session where I try to cover everyone in the class so they know they can be asked at any time even if their hand isn't up.

Discipline

Teacher: My biggest problem is discipline and I tended to think they couldn't do as much wrong as they actually do. I had more faith in the students than maybe I should have. I had no experience at all working with general-level students and it's a complete change. One thing that should be pushed in teacher training is to have a variety in levels of students in the grades which you teach. I was always teaching "academics" in practice teaching I was discouraged a couple of times, here, at the way I handled things. I never lost my cool, I tended to keep things inside which made it worse for me One day I said, "I just can't take this sort of thing anymore," and I went to the Department Head and it turned out that the class I had was a lulu of a class anyway, that no one wanted

Observer: You weren't the only one.

Teacher: No, I wasn't the only one. So I told myself that I would have a definite standard. I never thought of having a standard in terms of discipline, like what I would expect Now I'm learning Now I'm going to have rules that I feel are important and that will make it simpler for both them and myself. I would set it right at the beginning and this would definitely eliminate a lot of the discipline problems that I do have.

Students

Closely related to Linda's discussion of discipline were several comments concerning the students which she felt helped explain some of the difficulties.

Teacher: Seventy-five minutes is a long time, especially for general-level students. Their attention span is so short It seems so obvious that they should have pens when they come to class, even at the last period of the day. By this time they've lost everything – paper, pens, and all Before, in teacher-training, I was working with young adults, now I'm working with children that are on the verge of being adults and, again, they don't have seniors to imitate at this school and that makes a big difference. A lot of them still act like they're in grade eight – the big wigs in the school – so that's not too good As I said, the grade nines wouldn't do anything because they don't have someone to follow. Mind you, they have the grade tens to follow but this is only their (the grade ten's) second year of high school and they're not quite strong into the routine yet.

Linda was quite open and willing to talk about her teaching. She was relaxed and appeared to be relatively self-aware not only of her present attitudes toward teaching but of changes in attitude since she had begun in the fall. She agreed to have me observe her grade-nine biology class. This was a class which she felt she had managed to bring under a reasonable degree of control and it was the class which I observed for the remainder of our work together.

OBSERVATION I

One function of the first observation was to give Linda, the class, and myself a chance to acclimatize to one another. To reduce her anxiety the observation was not recorded. Another function was to provide further context for orienting subsequent work with Linda. While it was anticipated that the initial observation would reveal relevant patterns and impressions I felt that they would be too tentatively conceived and poorly documented to be productive in a conference and consequently we agreed to have no follow-up discussion of the lesson.

The class of 32 students was held in a crowded portable with three to five students seated around each rectangular table. Approximately one third of the class had their backs to Linda who, during discussion, remained in a small area in front of her lab table. The 75-minute period, following lunch, was in three parts: for 40 minutes students read several pages from the text and wrote answers to five questions which were discussed for 20 minutes. Remaining time was devoted to reading a further section of the text and writing answers to another set of questions.

My lasting impressions concerned management and the nature of the discussion. Linda spent the first eight minutes settling the class. During this time a pattern was repeated four times in which Linda would call the name of a student causing a disturbance, look at the student sternly, the student would become quiet, another student would create a disturbance,

Linda would call his name, look at him sternly, and so on. Meanwhile the rest of the class was idle or mumbling among themselves. An impression throughout the whole period was that Linda's disciplinary measures seemed to be arbitrary in the sense of when and whom. Some students baited her and she seemed to become embroiled in squabbles unnecessarily. For example, one interchange is reconstructed as follows:

Teacher: S, stop that!

Student: You should have seen what he did to me.

Teacher: What did he do?

During this episode the two students were grinning at each other and appeared to be treating the incident as a game.

In some cases substance was lost in the disciplinary shuffle. For example, Linda reprimanded Bill for talking with his neighbor, asked a substantive question of the class, Bill blurted out the correct answer, Linda reprimanded him for talking out of turn, then accepted an incorrect response from another student whose hand was raised. Throughout the period the noise level was not unbearable but it was quite high and as near as I could determine much of the talking among students was unproductive and unrelated to their work. At the beginning of class Linda explained that she would return tests and discuss, individually, difficulties students may have had, although she had time to return only five.

The overall impression of the substance of the lesson was that it was superficial. Students did not seem to take the work very seriously and little demand was placed on them during discussion. Linda tended to accept short responses to questions which required considerable thought and discussion to be covered adequately. For example, students were asked to "describe an ecological issue of current concern in our community or province and examine its causes and possible solution." One student responded with "pollution," another with "atmospheric pollution," another said "water," and another "noise." In another instance students were asked to comment on the statement that "the fisher is a forest dweller but a farmer's woodlot is an unlikely home for this predator." One student responded with "food" and another with "environment." In these examples all responses were accepted by Linda with no attempt to elicit fuller explanation or clarification.

It should be noted that to this point all of the work with Linda served solely as context for what was to follow. While the acquired information was useful for orienting the supervision, I purposefully did not refer, at this time or later, to the tentative impressions and patterns resulting from the first observation in order to honour our collegial agreement and to keep the process on a firm evidential footing.

PLANNING

The following week Linda and I held a planning session one day before the second observation. The function of the session was for me to become familiar with the content and Linda's intentions and for us to come to a mutual and an explicit understanding of what I would be looking for during the lesson.

Linda had planned the lesson in two parts. One was for the class to set up a "glove experiment" in which different kinds of food were placed in the fingertips of a hanging rubber glove, and pond water, presumably containing a variety of micro-organisms, added until the glove was nearly full. It was hoped that after a period of time water samples from each fingertip would show a predominance of different organisms and would help demonstrate the relationship between kinds of habitat and kinds of organisms. The second part of class was to write the answers to questions about a "mold-growing experiment" which students were to have done at home and to discuss these in class.

During the session Linda pondered how she was going to allow as many as possible to set up the glove experiment and still maintain control of the class. She felt caught in a dilemma since, as she put it, "I feel the more responsibility you're given the more you tend to delve into a subject, the more you learn about it and the interest grows from there." Yet her experience had been that the more she gave the class freedom and responsibility the more they became control problems. She indicated that her primary intentions for the glove experiment were to have the students relate their findings to the central points of the chapter and for them to learn to do activities on their own.

Teacher: ... but also to get in the habit of doing their own experiments. You can't leave them on their own They should be able to do this by reading the instructions on their own and seeing how it's set up. I don't expect them to know it all perfectly but at least to start to think independently I find that they depend on me to structure it all the time So I would really like to see that and from there I think the other goal would come. You know, the tying together

Linda frequently made reference to the apathetic attitude of many students which was manifested in their reluctance to do assignments or become actively engaged in discussion and activities.

Teacher: See, I was thinking of having them do these questions on their own and then have a discussion. I'd like them to think about it first, then have the discussion, not just say, "Let's look at question #1" and they say "yeah" and then I end up giving most of the answers I'm going to have a group up at the front setting up the experiment after we get going.

They're going to keep calling me and saying, "Am I doing this right?" Then about thirty hands, or whatever, twenty-five hands go up in the class saying, "What do you mean by question #1, how am I supposed to know?" That's playing a little game.

At this point in our discussion I suggested (and gave examples of) a probing strategy with a focus on not letting students off the hook.

Observer: Sometimes it works to maintain a kind of intellectual aggressiveness Now I don't know with these kids if that would work or not but that's one possible strategy for dealing with that kind of thing.

Teacher: Yeah. I think that it would be good. I'm just thinking how they'll react to it because of the way they've had me up until now, they may think, "Oh just tell us," you know, because of the way I've tended to do that.

Observer: Obviously, it's your decision.

Teacher: Oh, I realize that.

Goldhammer (1969, p. 205) comments that clinical supervision should not be conceptualized as a suggestion-giving practice since that would detract from the effort to respect and develop a teacher's autonomy. But he also acknowledges that there are times when providing concrete suggestions is warranted. I judged this situation as one in which a concrete suggestion was appropriate since Linda was acutely distressed about student apathy and, more particularly, seemed at a genuine loss as to how to deal with the "how-should-I-know" reaction during class discussion. I stressed that the probing strategy was only *one* way of addressing the issue in order for her to see that it is legitimate to explore and try out various strategies and that the implimentation of any particular strategy can be seen as a form of hypothesis testing in which even failure can provide data which helps point the way toward more successful practice.

The planning session was brought to a close with the following interchange:

Observer: Is there anything in particular that you'd like me to be looking for during the observation?

Teacher: O.K., their attitude toward the questions; it's almost like "Either give me the answer or I just don't care." They don't say it point blank like that, they are polite to that extent, but the underlying tone you might pick up. If you could work at that I'd appreciate it.

Observer: Maybe we could look at that and see if there's any *relationship* between the questions that are being asked and their attitudes. One of the things that I hear you saying is that it's very disturbing, the kind of "cop-out" attitude that some of them have.

Teacher: It is. You know, I thought, oh, every kid that age acts that way

but it's not because I've got two other classes and they're completely opposite. We have wonderful discussions. If they don't understand something they'll say, "can we go over that again" and they'll help each other out We have good discussions and then if I say, "work now," they're working But it's a completely different attitude and I just don't – I get frustrated, why, you know, why the difference?

Observer: O.K. Can we agree on this then. Are you comfortable with this?

Teacher: Oh yes.

The idea of a contract or mutual understanding as to the focus of observation is consistent with the intent of respecting the teacher's autonomy. Similarly, the development of a contract, regardless of its final form, is a matter of collegial negotiation. In this particular case, Linda's request that I focus on student "attitude toward the questions," if taken literally, did not provide the kind of scope needed for addressing her concerns. Consequently, I modified the contract to "the *relationship* between the questions that are being asked and their attitudes." Linda agreed with this modification.

OBSERVATION II

The day following the planning session I observed and recorded Linda's class. It was quieter than the previous observation but on the whole it reinforced most of my impressions concerning student apathy and productivity. Several patterns emerged from observational notes and from the lesson transcript which were relevant to Linda's concerns and to my interpretation of the events.

Here it is helpful to provide a context for the reader to understand the meaning, commonality, and significance of the patterns. In fact, as with most transcripts of teaching, there was evidence of numerous patterns. I selected those which, while reflecting different aspects of the teaching phenomenon, could be related to Linda's concerns with student apathy and behaviour disruption. During the observation and subsequent analysis of the lesson transcript I began to characterize the data in terms of *student accountability*. Simply stated, students were not held accountable for things they were expected to do. This idea of "accountability" is the common element in the following three patterns.

One emergent pattern was Linda's tendency to select the same four or five students to carry the discussion. As a result the rest of the class was not held accountable for organizing or articulating their thoughts on the questions. It was clear that a number of these students had "tuned-out" and spent their time engaged in diversions.

A second pattern, dubbed "don't-have-to," typically concerned lab work, experiments, and demonstrations which students were expected to

do at home. The gist of the pattern was the message from Linda that students could do an activity if they wanted to, but they *didn't have to*. A corollary was that if activities were not done, the consequences would not be severe. (Most of the activities were not simply matters of choice, but were necessary to provide data for answering questions and understanding the concepts.) The following are examples from the lesson transcript.

Teacher: Some of you have told me that you haven't been able to do this experiment at home simply because you haven't got the jars or your mother doesn't want you doing it at home. If you have that problem, I suggest you bring your supplies of food or whatever to school. You can set one up right here and can keep it in the cupboard there. You can label it with your name, and I think it's only fair that you do one yourself. You won't have the satisfaction of seeing what happens unless you do it yourself.

A bit later in the lesson the following interchange occurred (students were describing the results of their "mold-growing experiment" using apples and cheese).

Teacher: But did you get any results?

Student: Well, like, when I cut it, it would turn brown.

Teacher: O.K., so maybe the container isn't airtight. That could affect it.

Student: I've got a ... (not intelligible).

Teacher: I see. Maybe you should do another jar then, and start it again.

Student: Do you want me to ... (not intelligible)?

Teacher: Anybody else do a different kind of food?
(student's question not answered)

Student: (students murmuring)

Teacher: Fran? Did you do something else? You didn't do any?

Student: I didn't have an apple.

At this point Linda engaged another student who had done the exercise. After several interchanges with this student she turned to another.

Teacher: Right. How about you?

Student: I didn't do anything.

Teacher: You didn't do anything? I don't think you can afford to sit there and chitter-chatter then.

And later:

Teacher: What you could do for questions #5 and #4 is set up two different ones yourself

Again:

Teacher: Now, if you'd like, for this question you can bring your container with the mold to school and use the microscopes that we have here to see what you've got

The "don't-have-to" pattern occurred seven times during the 15-minute discussion. The most striking pattern, dubbed "question follow-up," was the fact that during discussion, not one of the seven questions was answered, either by Linda or by the students. The following interaction was typical:

Teacher: Question #5. "Compare the kinds of micro-organisms growing on your food with the kinds growing on other kinds of food."

Student: That's two.

Teacher: O.K. then. Sorry, I take back what I said in question #4. I guess you need identical food. So we're to compare two different slices of bread. Jack and his bread and someone else and his bread compared Question #5 is when you compare with two different kinds of micro-organisms on bread What you could do for questions #5 and #4 is set up two different ones yourself. Is that what you're doing Gavin?

Student: (not intelligible)

Teacher: O.K. If you have any problems, come over here and I'll set it up here.

Student: No.

Teacher: O.K. Question #6. "Speculate about how colonization occurred in the food container." Your microscopic observations provide data to help you answer this question. Now, if you'd like, for this question you can bring your container with the mold to school and use the microscopes that we have here to see what you've got. The first part of the question, however, says to speculate. What does speculate mean?

At this point there were several interchanges in which "speculation," "controlled experiment," and "hypothesis" were briefly discussed, followed by:

Teacher: They have an idea of what to expect and they try to verify it with experiments. Remember in activity #1, shh! Class! In activity #1 we compared facts and data and what to do with data and how to interpret it So this is basically what you're doing in question #6. You're following the same procedure a scientist would follow after he or she would do an experiment. You speculate about what actually happens during an experiment. Why do I think that happened? O.K. How did this happen?

And finally question #7. "Has the amount of food in your container changed? Account for your observations." Has the amount of food changed? Mark?

In this brief period of time questions #5 and #6 were asked but neither was actually addressed.

These three disparate patterns have been linked through the concept of student accountability, and it is reasonable to hypothesize that they project a common message to students: you don't have to attend to business in this class. If this message were reinforced from day to day through these and similar repeated patterns, it is not difficult to see a relationship with student apathy and at least some behaviour disruptions. If, as a student, I am bored in part because of not doing the tasks at hand, then engaging in diversions at least alleviates the tedium.

CONFERENCE ON OBSERVATION II

Several days following the observation Linda and I met to discuss the lesson and by that time she had had an opportunity to read a transcript of the recorded class discussion. At the beginning of the conference I reiterated our contractual understanding and provided a context, based on our previous discussions, for examining the "question follow-up" and "don't-have-to patterns" in terms of student accountability. The patterns were first discussed generally and then evidence for each was provided by going through the transcript page by page. During this process Linda was asked repeatedly whether or not the evidence "fit" the interpretations. This was done not only to corroborate my analysis, but also to make clear to Linda that she had a voice in the process. The conference went smoothly with Linda actively engaging in the examination of the data. I monitored her reactions throughout the discussion and ended by asking for her reaction to the entire process we had been through.

Observer: How does this sit with you?

Teacher: Oh fine, I agree with most of the things and it is a good way of seeing it.

Observer: What I am concerned about is the process, do you find it (T interjects with "It's fine") irritating?

Teacher: No, not at all, don't think of it that way – no, no, not at all

We agreed to hold a planning session the next week followed by a third observation.

Before moving to a discussion of the subsequent stages of our work, I want to provide some rationale as to why the conference was constructed around the idea of student accountability and the "question follow-up" and "don't-have-to" patterns. As mentioned earlier one of the primary

goals of the process is for the teacher to become more autonomous in analyzing and controlling teaching behaviour. I took the lead with the analysis in our first conference, not only to honour our contract by providing feedback, but also to show Linda concrete examples of pattern analysis so that she could have a clear understanding of the process and a basis for developing her own analytical skills.

Goldhammer (1969, pp. 107–30) has suggested “saliency,” “treatability,” and “fewness” as criteria for selecting patterns to work on during the conference. From our previous discussions it was clear that Linda was concerned about two related issues: student apathy and behaviour disruptions. The patterns of “question follow-up” and “don’t-have-to” were salient because they addressed her concerns and because there was clear evidence of the patterns in the transcript. The importance of evidence cannot be overestimated. Especially in the first conference it was vital that Linda understand that the process was not arbitrary. This did not mean that we could not entertain hypotheses, speculations, and inferences but that they would be recognized as such and tied to the data.

The two patterns were “treatable” in several senses. First of all it was highly unlikely that they were manifestations of deeper personality characteristics and consequently it was not likely that Linda would find them personally threatening. Second, the patterns were specific enough to be manageable and would not require a herculean effort for Linda to address in her teaching. I felt that if she did address these patterns in subsequent lessons chances were good that she would see significant improvement and would experience considerable success in controlling her teaching behaviour. In fact during the discussion of “question follow-up” I pointed out an instance in the transcript where Linda *had* pursued a student’s response with gratifying results:

Observer: Notice what happened when you followed up a student’s response to the question “do some colonies grow faster than others?”

Teacher: I remember when they brought up that example. I was so pleased.

Observer: Interestingly, that question can be answered by either “yes” or “no.”

Teacher: But I asked them to explain their answer.

Observer: You pushed on that and said “what made you say ‘yes’.” You followed it up with the student and look what happened. (The student had responded with an appropriate analogy from a much earlier experiment with flowering plants.)

This instance was called to Linda’s attention not only to honour the rational basis of the supervisory process, but also to indicate that the underlying skill was already in her repertoire of teaching behaviours.

The criterion of “fewness” simply recognizes that it is easy to overload a teacher during a conference, especially if there are a large number of patterns or if they have no apparent relationship to each other. For these reasons only the two patterns were selected for detailed discussion and these were linked using the concept of student accountability. While Linda was concerned both with student apathy and behaviour disruptions our contract was more related to the former and, too, I anticipated that the idea of accountability (as a conceptual organizer, but not as a pattern) had more potential for dealing with a variety of underlying issues than did a conceptualization in the narrower terms of behaviour disruption or classroom control.

For example, “student accountability” allowed me to begin dealing tactfully with a potentially serious issue. My sense was that students were apathetic because they were unchallenged. On the other hand, Linda felt that because the students were not academically oriented they could not handle the material. Consequently she simplified her lessons and was purposefully less demanding. From my point of view this exacerbated the problem. From her standpoint it was a sound pedagogical move. While in retrospect I feel my judgment was reasonable, in terms of the supervisory process it was important for Linda to understand that there was a radically different way of interpreting events. In the future this would at least put her in a better position to make autonomous choices. (I should add here that the underlying issue with regard to student capabilities was not mentioned in this conference.)

While this concept of student accountability was in important respects contrary to her view of the class there was a clue that Linda would be receptive to this interpretation. (Certainly her whole demeanour to this stage had been one of receptivity, but it is helpful for the observer to have some concrete evidence, however small, that a *particular* supervisory strategy will be useful.) During our first major interview I had asked Linda how her concerns about teaching had changed since she began. Among other things she talked about her anxiety in failing students and related this to the locus of responsibility.

Teacher: Before, maybe in September, I think I might have thought, “Well, it’s his fault.” Now I tend to think, “Well, it’s not entirely his fault.” I could have done something, I could have helped him more

This comment was significant because it suggested that an analysis of the two patterns in terms of accountability (which tended to shift the interpretation from the capabilities of the students to the responsibility of the teacher) would not be totally inconsistent with Linda’s attitude.

PLANNING

One week following the conference Linda and I had a planning session for the third observation. The lesson was to be in three parts: class

discussion of five questions from the text; students working on their own in setting up a balanced aquarium; and an individual reading assignment. The plans were discussed in light of the two major patterns previously identified. It was evident that Linda had given the patterns considerable thought and had been working on them in her teaching. The following interchange occurred as Linda was talking about the balanced aquarium.

Observer: It seems to me that you are addressing the “don’t-have-to” pattern in a very significant way here.

Teacher: The patterns are repeating?

Observer: No. You’re getting them involved in activities that are not being done at home. You have more control which seems to be moving a step in that direction.

Teacher: As a matter of fact, some of my students have asked me why they couldn’t just do this in a drawer in their home. I said it is better if we do it at school so everyone can see the efforts of your work.

With regard to the “question follow-up” pattern Linda outlined the strategy she intended to use during class discussion. She wanted to probe students for more complete answers to questions as well as to shift the responsibility to them for understanding what the questions were asking. She also indicated that one of her goals was for the students to support their answers to questions.

Teacher: ... then I tell them to think about it, and don’t worry about a right or wrong answer, think of your reasons, what you have to do is back up your answers.

During the session I suggested that if students were to be probed for more complete responses during discussion it would likely require more time for them to formulate their ideas. Interestingly, Linda expressed some concern about this. My interpretation was that she felt that rapid-fire questions with single word responses were necessary for keeping the class under control.

Teacher: I will give them the time to wait and they will think, and the rest of them will take a break. I think that’s what I am afraid of. Maybe I would let it happen, I don’t know.

Observer: You might give that a trial.

Teacher: Sure.

Observer: So we will be able to see – again it is a kind of hypothesis about teaching strategy.

Teacher: Sure.

Observer: Maybe they *will* take a break. We will surely know.

Teacher: What is frustrating is getting them back to the assignment. Yeah, the only way to find out is to try.

Observer: Do you feel O.K. about this?

Teacher: Sure.

Our contractual understanding for the observation was that I would concentrate on the two patterns during her class discussion and would also look more generally at discussion technique.

OBSERVATION III

The following day I observed Linda's class. With regard to the two specific patterns previously discussed the lesson was very successful. There was no instance of the "don't-have-to" pattern and all five of the questions were relevantly addressed. However, one pattern emerged which was central to the notion of student accountability. It was the tendency for Linda to ask a question, receive a relatively short response from a student, then provide an elaboration on that response. The following interchange from the lesson illustrates the "teacher elaboration" pattern.

Teacher: Any examples other than the forest fire for how environmental changes will affect populations within a community?

Student: A flood.

Teacher: A flood. O.K. So a flood or a forest fire. They bring about changes.

Student: A sudden change in temperature.

Teacher: Right, a sudden change in temperature. Let's look into these. A forest fire, changes in temperature, or weather. O.K. These are all examples that help support the statement Now an example of this is a forest fire. All the trees are burnt down and the animals can't live there any more. Floods – now this would make all the animals move away. Unfortunately plants can't move so they'd be affected – plants and trees. Changes in temperature – all of a sudden it may be too hot or too cold for animals to live in this environment. Some animals may not be affected though and could survive in this environment when others would have to move, causing a change in the community. O.K. Question number 2

One message this pattern might give students is that they need not elaborate their responses since the teacher will do it for them. The pattern is debilitating to genuine discussion and does not allow the opportunity for students to support their responses to questions. In other words, the pattern sabotaged one of Linda's primary intentions for the discussion. Interestingly, this pattern is similar to that seen in the very first observation where Linda had accepted single-word responses to complex

questions. The major difference is that here she accepted short responses and then provided her own elaboration. One interpretation of this is that in her effort to *make sure* that the questions were adequately covered (in response to the “question follow-up” pattern during the second observation) *she* provided the coverage and consequently reverted to accepting short student responses.

CONFERENCE ON OBSERVATION III

In terms of the “don’t-have-to” and “question follow-up” patterns Linda had shown significant improvement. The stage was now set for discussing the *manner* with which questions were handled rather than merely whether or not they were being addressed. During the conference I called her attention to the evidence of success in dealing with the original patterns. Prior to the conference I had asked Linda to examine the new lesson transcript to see if there were any patterns that she felt related to the work we had been doing or that she was particularly concerned about. This was a deliberate effort to shift the responsibility for analysis to Linda so that she could function more autonomously.

Teacher: The main thing that I noticed was that the teacher seemed to monopolize the conversation ... I could see where anyone could just tune out when I would say something and they might think they had all understood. Then I would ask a question and they wouldn’t know it ... This is too much monologue to keep listening to ...

As Linda talked generally about the transcript it became clear that the “monologue” pattern was essentially the same one that I had given the label “teacher elaboration” and so both terms were used. Although her general remarks about “monologue” were clearly articulated and to the point, I encouraged her to give specific examples of the pattern from the transcript so that *she* would honor the evidential base of her own analysis.

Observer: I wonder if it would be useful to go back and see where that began because you will see just what was said. You are summarizing on page 2 aren’t you?

Teacher: Yes, it is a bit of a summary but they are not going to listen to me because they know I will be babbling on for a while about a summary and they don’t think it is important ... I could see them sitting down and staring at me tuned-out and looking around the room ... Maybe more student involvement, like having someone explain it in their own words.

Observer: O.K., well let’s go back in the transcript to where that began and see where that strategy might have been appropriate.

As with the analysis I repeatedly shifted the discussion of alternative strategies onto Linda. Here is an example:

Observer: O.K., let's go back to page two and try to see what could be done to steer away from the problem of one-word answers. Here, on line 28, apparently Thomas has said "forest fire."

Teacher: So was Thomas's response an example or was it explaining the question?

Observer: What would have been another alternative there?

Teacher: I could have just gone back and asked him "What's the question asking?"

We systematically examined the transcript, exploring various strategies for dealing with the instances of the "teacher elaboration" pattern. At one point early in the discussion Linda gave an indication that she had internalized the nature of the pattern and its potential consequences.

Teacher: So that's what makes me monopolize the conversation – asking these very short-answer questions!

At the end of the conference I introduced an issue which Linda and I discussed during the very first planning session but which had not been the focus of observation. In that session, and in the context of planning for the "glove experiment," Linda had voiced her concern that students were doing activities "just to do them" and admitted that they had very little understanding of scientific process. The glove experiment was potentially rich for dealing with scientific process, but that potential had not been realized largely because of the way the experiment had been presented to the students in the text and in class.

In the present conference I wanted to use the example of the "glove experiment" to show how terms like observation, hypothesis, and control could be related to what the students were doing so that they could begin to understand some of the characteristics of scientific process. My reason for mentioning the issue was that the students were currently engaged in setting up a balanced aquarium, an activity which was also rich for addressing scientific process. I intended to outline the "glove experiment" case and then explore with Linda how a similar strategy could be used with the "balanced aquarium." After I talked about the "glove experiment" in some detail, the following interchange occurred:

Observer: I was wondering to what extent they saw *how* this was an experiment and that there was a hypothesis and that there were observations to be made.

Teacher: Yes, that's our problem – mainly because of lack of equipment. They should have been able to see what was happening in there and not just be told and assume that it's right Now as it happens there was nothing in that pond water, something went wrong. That experiment went down the drain It somehow got botched up.

Observer: That's the way.

Teacher: We went through the whole process. The day before, we thought we had something in there.

Observer: At least if you set up the conditions like this, the student has some idea or conception of what the relationships are.

Teacher: Oh yes, I agree with you wholly. But that's what gets me about the lack of equipment. They should be working in groups, and that's why they can't, because they haven't had the chance to do an experiment on their own.

In spite of Linda's agreement, her attention to practical problems indicated that she had missed the point I was trying to make. I was concerned about what happens, conceptually, when someone does an experiment. My point had nothing to do with whether the students did their own experiment, did it in groups, or as a class. Nor did the conceptual issues depend on the "success" of the experiment – as many points about scientific process could have been made about a failure. Because the whole episode represented a diversion from the main gist of discussion I did not feel that pressing the issue was warranted.

One interpretation of Linda's apparent failure to understand the issue is simply that I had not made it clear. Another interpretation is that, given the state of Linda's professional development, she was not ready to deal with issues which strayed very far beyond the bounds of management and control. However, a third explanation relates to the methodology of clinical supervision and merits consideration. In terms of the integrity of the supervisory process the diversion into subject-matter concerns was badly handled if not a blatant strategic mistake. In the first place, the diversion was not a part of our "contractual understanding" and consequently Linda was not prepared for the distinctly different direction I had taken. Second, it violated one of the basic tenets of the process – the effort to avoid "overload." The diversion came at the end of an entire hour of discussion of the "teacher elaboration" pattern in which Linda was visibly concerned with what she had seen in the transcript. Small wonder that she was not prepared to entertain yet another issue.

OBSERVATION IV

We did not hold a formal planning session for the fourth and final observation one-and-a-half weeks later. By telephone we agreed that the contract would remain essentially the same as before – that is, the focus of the analysis would be on discussion technique, especially Linda's effort to probe for more complete and reasoned responses. On the day of observation Linda began with a brief introduction and then turned to the class discussion.

Teacher: O.K. let's have a real discussion on these questions. These questions relate to studying the structures of different parts of animals and determining their suitability to their environment. Last day we talked about the word "suitability." What did we decide?

Student: Fitting in with their surroundings.

Teacher: Fits in with their surroundings, O.K. Look at question 1 then and see how we can relate this idea to these questions. (Teacher reads the question) "Note the difference in leg coverings between the ptarmigan and the ostrich. Consider why each type suits its owner." O.K., let's go to the ostrich first. Can someone describe its structure?

Student: Well, it's got long and powerful legs and it's got a round feathery body with a long neck.

Teacher: O.K., I think we should just concentrate on the leg covering right now. You mentioned the word "powerful" though, what made you say "powerful?"

Student: Well, you can just tell by the way they're so, so long and the way they look.

Teacher: O.K., so what's Steve doing then, by saying "it's powerful by the way it looks"? What's he doing?

Student: (unintelligible) ... he just assumes that the bird runs.

Teacher: O.K., he assumes that the bird runs and he's *speculating* here on what he sees. That's basically what we're doing in all these questions. We're speculating, based on our observations. (Here there is a brief digression about going to the zoo. Teacher brings the discussion back.) Any other comments about the ostrich? About its legs, the covering? Charles.

Student: It's got lines on it.

Teacher: It's got lines on it. Any feathers there?

Student: No.

Student: Drier climate.

Teacher: Drier climate?

Student: Yes, he doesn't have feathers because the climate is drier and warmer.

Teacher: That's good.

Student: Big feet.

Teacher: Big feet. Can anyone add to that, add to Bob's comment? (Teacher returns to previous student.) You suggested the ostrich lived in a dry climate because there are no feathers on his legs.

Student: (Student elaborates but it is not clear on the tape.)

Teacher: We do know he lives in Australia, right? Now about the ptarmigan? Any ideas?

Student: His legs are short, because if a bird has bigger legs it's hard to fly fast.

Teacher: So what are you assuming there? You said that the bird doesn't fly fast. What are you assuming from the structure of its legs?

Student: That they can pull up into the body.

Teacher: Good. See you're making good speculations – gathering ideas just from what you see. You've made the judgment that the legs are short so they tuck in under the body and therefore it is easier for it to fly. Why do they look so thick?

Student: They're furrier.

Teacher: They're thick or furry. Why might they look like that? (Teacher addresses the same student.)

Student: Well, because – so it doesn't tip over.

Teacher: O.K., for balance then. (Teacher proceeds to the next question.)

This excerpt represented a small portion of the total discussion which on the whole proceeded in a similar fashion. Three distinct patterns emerged which in my judgment improved Linda's discussion technique significantly. First, she repeatedly pushed for clarification of student responses and would frequently ask students to outline their reasoning. Second, she frequently related a student's comment to what the student had said previously or to another student's response and did so by mentioning their names. (The likely message for the students was that their responses would be taken seriously and that it was important to pay attention to their peers.) Finally, when Linda did enter the discussion at any length she tended to comment on what the student was doing intellectually rather than elaborating or giving an answer.

While I would not present this excerpt as the exemplar of discussion technique, in light of the earlier observations and Linda's intentions for this lesson it was a singular success. Interestingly, prior to this lesson Linda and I had talked about discussion technique on four separate occasions yet on the whole the first three observations would not be regarded as startling improvements. Two brief points about this: first, with regard to autonomy, it is not likely a coincidence that Linda's significantly improved performance during the fourth observation followed her active role in pattern analysis during the previous conference; second, if her attempts at improvement are looked at in terms of incremental development, then periods of apparent "behavioral dormancy" might well have been times in which she was assimilating the flood

of information presented to (and developed by) her. This supports the idea that the supervisory process needs historical continuity and that it requires a time span long enough to insure that an observer can be available when the teacher is ready for risk taking and needs supportive criticism.

CONFERENCE ON OBSERVATION IV

At the beginning of the conference I asked Linda how she felt about the lesson in light of what she had been working on.

Teacher: Well, there was an improvement on their part. It still could be improved upon. Generally, I felt happier about it.

Observer: We'll have a look through the transcript There's just an abundance of evidence that you were pushing and probing and I was wondering if you felt that it was having any positive effect as far as the students are concerned

Teacher: Definitely it has, because they certainly think twice before coming to ask me something. I've done this even on the one-to-one basis where they've said "I don't understand this question." I'll push it even more – like I won't just say to myself, "well I think they're asking this." I'll just say, "well what would this mean ... and why would they (the text) want to do this." So now they reason it out long before they come to see me. When they do come to see me I have less heavy questions now and it's a big improvement I think they're working better too because it's causing them to think more. When they sit down to work, they look at a problem and they don't think, "well, I can't do this" like they used to at the beginning of our sessions Now they think about it more

Observer: You think they're more confident.

Teacher: They're more confident, yeah. So I guess it's my fault all along, really – my technique. I was thinking they were incapable and here I was holding them back myself. It's really ironic.

In all our work together this statement by Linda was probably the most significant because it indicated a shift in her assessment of her students' capabilities. That shift may have occurred at a later time or without the interaction with an observer, but had it not occurred there would have been a very real limit to her growth as a teacher.

CONCLUSION

Using this case study I have attempted to show clinical supervision over time, showing how the process depends on historical continuity. The observer is making judgments and planning a course of action which

respects not only concrete evidence of the teacher's performance, but also the total context of the situation, including the way in which the teacher is ready and willing to engage the process.

The manner in which the process is conducted is vital to the spirit of clinical supervision. The observer's role is not a matter of instilling "correct" patterns but, rather, is a matter of helping the teacher develop awareness and control of behaviour so that it is possible to autonomously develop and select patterns appropriate to the situation. If the interaction is to be genuine a teacher's developing autonomy must be respected at all points in the process. It requires an observer's sensitivity to what the teacher is saying, doing, and feeling. It requires that the observer heed the evidence and the context which gives that evidence meaning. On the issue of evidence, let me conclude with a portion of a discussion Linda and I had at the end of our work together.

Observer: Can you recall any parts of the process you felt were most helpful?

Teacher: Definitely. Whenever we go over the transcripts – seeing it all on paper and having to think about it. When you're teaching it all goes so fast, you're so worried about what you are going to be thinking about next instead of what you just said that you don't realize how you are communicating to the kids. Seeing it on paper really makes you stop and think The important thing is that I was thinking twice of everything I was doing. I wasn't just doing it once and then it was forgotten The main thing was the questions. They made me pinpoint the problems. In the beginning my problems were varied. And I think the more we talked about it, the more specific I became in stating the problem.

Observer: To what extent do you feel that was helped by just looking at the transcripts or was it the interaction between the two of us.

Teacher: Interactions, but the transcripts helped too. It's easier to see the written words than just talking.

Observer: And you've got evidence.

Teacher: Yes, definitely, that has definitely helped. Even at the beginning I wanted to tell you that this was bothering me but it wasn't all that specific At the beginning I wouldn't have been able to say that these were my problems and what can I do about it. We needed that interaction.

NOTES

¹ I am referring to the work of Cogan (1973), Mosher and Purpel (1972), Goldhammer (1969), and more recently Acheson and Gall (1980).

² All names have been changed in this study. Unless otherwise indicated quoted material is from transcriptions of tape-recorded sessions and observations. In some cases quotes have been edited to improve readability.

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