THE PEDAGOGIES OF BECOMING: THE CASE OF SUPERVISOR- SUPERVISEE INTERACTIONS IN A MASTER OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PROGRAMME IN NEW ZEALAND

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METHODOLOGY

The guiding research question of this study was: How do a supervisor and supervisee construct a sense of belonging in their community of practice? In order to answer this question, the researcher used an ethnographic approach (Wolcott, 1994) to examine the interactions of the supervisor with his supervisees. I had multiple incidental encounters with the supervisor from March 2016 to October 2017, and interviewed him once formally. I took field notes as I observed him interact with his supervisees including the focal student in this study from March 2017 to June 2017 approximately four times a week from one to two hours per day. I then focused on one particular supervisee and interviewed him twice about his experience. Then I checked my interpretations with the supervisor and that supervisee. The interviews were semi-structured initially but became open ended as the participants chose to discuss the relevant topics about their experience. The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and then they were transcribed. Transcriptions were checked with the participants for accuracy. The data were analysed using discourse analytic methods (Gee, 2013). The researcher's observation notes were reviewed multiple times. Then, the interviews and the observation notes were triangulated (Geertz, 1973) that allowed for the credibility of the findings. The supervisee was a Pakeha Master's student and his supervisor was also Pakeha, who was doing a PhD himself at the time of study. The program of study was a Master of Professional Practice (MPP hereafter) in a tertiary institute in New Zealand. Otago Polytechnic Human Ethics Committee granted ethics approval to this study.

FINDINGS

In the subsequent sections, the overarching themes emerging from the data are analysed.

CO-CONSTRUCTION OF A SHARED MEANING

My observations of the supervisor-supervisee interactions and then the interviews with both the supervisor and the supervisee demonstrated that they co-constructed a shared meaning due to their previous life and work experiences, interests, and establishing rapport early on in the program. In this regard the supervisee pointed out:

The whole area of understanding and rapport we built very early in the piece was essential to me one feeling comfortable but also feeling challenged at a level. [Name of the supervisor] was actually able to challenge me not

only at a base one level but also the future thinking model as well (Interview data, May 2017).

The supervisee had an industry background and later in his career decided to pursue his lifelong interest via a Master's degree. His supervisor having an almost similar background was instrumental in building a meaningful relationship which he not only felt comfortable with but at the same time found challenging because he particularly was anxious about whether or not the supervisor was able to make sense of his writings (Interview data, May 2017). Along the same lines the supervisor mentioned,

> I think [name of programme leader] in choosing me as [supervisee's name] mentor was intuitive completely. She is intuitive in that she realised that me and [name of the supervisee] came from the same backgrounds and I think we had shared interests. But more than that I think there were other synergies. The fact that I am doing my PhD studies and I am also very passionate about learning, and naturally with my background, I realised that we share an awful lot in common because I have a rigorous scientific background myself and my industry was a high tech industry and I was very conscious of high tech development and what it entailed and how it came about (Interview data, May 2017).

As demonstrated above, the supervisor and supervisee co-constructed a shared meaning due to the fact that a) they both had industry experience and later on in their career had pursued their academic endeavours, b) had vested interest in the learning process, and c) established a rapport with each other which was instrumental in their mutual interactions. All the above conditions facilitated the emergence of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) wherein both supervisor and supervisee engaged in dynamic processes by means of participating in and contributing to a joint creation of meaning, knowledge and understanding situated in their tertiary institutional context. Although in the case of the focal participant in this study, the background of the supervisor and the supervisee were similar (i.e. they both came from a Pakeha cultural and linguistic background and both had industry and academic experience), the data from the observations confirm that the supervisor managed to establish shared meanings with his other supervisees who were of international backgrounds through their everyday interactions.

MUTUAL INTERACTION IN A DYNAMIC CYCLE OF REFLECTION AND ACTION

The narratives of both the supervisor and supervisee show that the MPP journey was a process in which the two parties engaged in dynamic reflection and action. In this regard, the supervisor mentioned,

> This process helped me to understand the power of facilitation model …And through that process we quickly realized that it wasn't just a development journey for [name of supervisee]. It was also a very interesting development journey for me. The best way I can describe it was this concept of staircasing each other where I say one thing and it has ramifications for how [name of the supervisee] then thinks and then he says something back to me which staircases me into another dimension (Interview data, May, 2017).

And, along the same lines, the supervisee indicated,

> What I like about it is, that when we discuss things, it's sort of like, as we evolve, we evolve still keeping to the subject matter, because it is really easy to have a disjointed conversation that stimulates all of those sorts of things, but I think we evolve towards a point and you know, the snowball increases in velocity and volume as we head up the hill, so we go up to higher learning as we go and it actually grows bigger and bigger and you kind of look at those things and go, wow it's pretty cool (Interview data, May, 2017).

As seen above, the supervisor used the metaphor of 'staircasing' to stress his pedagogical underpinnings by placing a strong role in creating a learning space where the supervisee could enjoy the same power relation as himself.

Likewise, the supervisee used the metaphor of 'snowball' to show that he together with his supervisor enjoy the same power relation and so seamlessly build up each other's knowledge in a collaborative way. They both used the metaphors of staircasing and snowball to show that the relationship was a multi-sided, dynamic, continuous, ever-changing, and ever-evolving one where the supervisor and supervisee mutually reflected on each other's interpretations. The use of metaphor is significant in the conceptualization of the learning process because metaphors direct the focus away from accounts of the nature of conceptual structures to understanding the discourse context and processes involved (Tay, 2011). Creating learning models through metaphor was instrumental in the supervisor-supervisee learning process as mentioned by the supervisor.

> I look at my own model of capability as a process, as a series of cycles which grew out of unconsciously appreciating [the supervisee's name] model of prototype development where again it was a series of cycles. And it was that analogy that gave me the sense of it of what I have come to realize as subsequent learning and I have shared it with [the supervisee's name]. And actually learning and problem solving using the same process. So, research, problem solving and learning are different sides of the same coin. And that is an extraordinary powerful insight I have gained through this process. I think the thing for me which is powerful for [name of the programme] is that [the learning] is very personal but developing the whole person in this journey and allowing each of us because it is not simply one sided, to both gain out of it, and I have gained immensely out of it in my research and learning journey (Interview data, May, 2017).

The metaphor of models discussed by the supervisor above explains how they enabled the two parties to mutually interact with each other and reflect critically on their own learning by taking ownership of their own learning through their independent unique models of learning. During this process both the supervisor and supervisee applied their agency (Ahearn, 2001) by taking control of their learning and appropriating the metaphorical models to their unique learning experiences.

CONSTRUCTING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES

The outcome of the MPP programme for both supervisee and supervisor was the construction of professional identities which came about as a result of their everyday interactions. In this regard, the supervisee pointed out,

> I am now a pracademic with the practical application and the academic side. That was a revelation to me because that was not somewhere I thought I was before because I was thinking of myself as being one or the other and I was fascinated to read the latest thinking on introverts and extroverts and am now [professing] the profile of an ambivert who has essence of both and I think that is a little indicative of what is happening in the world today. But when I apply that to myself and I look back and see I looked at things very very differently when I started this journey toward the end. It benefits me greatly going to the doctorate programme but I am now also aware how I start my doctoral programme will be very different when I finish and I find that very exciting. I am very much on a journey that I haven't arrived at its destination (Interview data, May, 2017).

The MPP programme as illustrated above shaped the identities of the supervisee so much so that he thought of himself not in binary terms but rather linking all his industry experience to the academic journey he went through with the aid of his supervisor. This process enabled him to reimagine himself by connecting the dots in his lifelong learning experience and seeing a more enlarged image of himself (e.g. I am now a pracademic and ambivert).The supervisor also experienced the same situation as shown below.

> I think my engagement with [supervisee's name] has helped me to formulate a model of learning practice for my PhD study. As a result I think I am now confident that I have a significant model for my own learning and

a type of learning everyone needs for the 21st century (Interview data, June, 2017).

The above accounts show that identities of the supervisee and supervisor were constructed discursively. This view of identity construction sees identity not as a fixed and static entity and category based on fixed attributes associated with individual, but rather describes it as 'a dynamic construct that may not only develop and change over time but is also context dependent' (Ellemers, Haslam, Van Knippenberg, & Platow, 2003 p.13). The outcome of conceptualizing identities as a social construct is that identities are produced and constructed in local context and in connection to other social agents in our social space (Schnurr & Zayts, 2011).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of the findings from the supervisor's and supervisee's reflections in this case study suggested that supervision is a dynamic process wherein the two parties in their communities of practice (Eckert & Wenger, 2005) a) co-constructed a shared meaning, b) mutually interacted in a dynamic cycle of reflection and action, c) and constructed professional identities. In this relationship, the novice-expert relationship changes (hence the power relationship between them), where at some point the supervisee could be the expert and at another point, the novice.

The relationship between the supervisor and supervisee in this process should not be understood towards producing a final product (Vehviläinen & Lōfstrōm, 2016) i.e., a big report or a product but rather a learning process through which both the supervisor and the supervisee contribute to the problem, staircase each other and evolve together. In this process, the two parties participated in the supervisory learning space based on their relevant professional experience, reflections at the present time, and their reimagining of themselves in future. The role of the supervisor was then that of a facilitator who regarded himself as a member of that community of practice who promoted a culture of critical thinking in his interactions with the supervisee. The supervisor and supervisee mutually interacted with each other and formed a community of practice and enquiry.

The study also showed the importance of metaphor in representing and conceptualization of academic norms while the supervisor engaged actively with the supervisee during the learning process. The metaphors of staircasing and learning models helped the supervisee's learning and facilitated the acquisition of knowledge, problem solving, and critical thinking skills (Cameron, 2007; Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011).

The study also showed that identities of supervisor and supervisee are shaped in the social space as the two individuals interacted with each other, enhanced their capabilities, and learned to reimagine themselves by thinking about new possibilities of being and becoming the person they want to be in the future (Neilsen, 2015; Norton, 2010). In the words of Wenger (1998, p. 215), "Learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming."

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