A school-university teacher education partnership: Reconceptualising reciprocity of learning

Deb Clarke[1] and Matthew Winslade[1]

dclarke@csu.edu.au; mwinslade@csu.edu.au

Corresponding author: Deb Clarke
[1]Charles Sturt University

Abstract

As initial teacher education students transition to the profession, the experiences offered by the university and partner institutions require intentional, careful, and strategic planning, to ensure positive relational, organisational, and pedagogical experiences for all stakeholders (Lynch & Smith, 2012; Moss, 2008). To minimise the tensions between the theoretical positioning of the university and the practicality of the classroom, respectful and collaborative partnerships need to be central to the design and facilitation of professional experience programmes (Lynch & Smith, 2012). The 'Hub' is a longitudinal *research* and *practice* partnership between a NSW regional university with Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes, and a local, multi-campus secondary College. This paper describes the outcomes of one collaboratively designed initiative of the project: evaluating a team teaching approach in the Bachelor of Education degree. Survey and interview data were gathered from all key stakeholders regarding the efficacy of the 'teaming' of academics and teachers to facilitate workshops in professional experience subjects. Survey data were statistically analysed, while thematic analysis was applied to qualitative artefacts. Results of the initial pilot indicate significant value-adding to the professional experience subjects, particularly flagging students increased readiness for employability. Reciprocally, the school teachers indicated their increased understandings of the preparedness of ITE students to engage in professional experience, their heightened capacity to reflect on practice, and enhancement of their leadership and mentoring skills.

Keywords: community of practice, initial teacher education, partnership, professional experience, regional university, secondary school, team teach

Introduction

Initial teacher education (ITE) programs have been perennially criticised by school educators for their lack of connection to the authenticity of 'real-world' classroom practice. Despite university offerings of carefully sequenced opportunities for ITE students to participate in professional experience placements, there remains a divide between what is privileged, valued and practised within the university context, and that of school partners (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Zeichner, 2010). The historic model of 'applying theory to practice', with the universities assuming the role of theorist and the school the role of practice, creates tensions for ITE students as they translate their university understandings in the reality of contemporary classrooms. Darling-Hammond (2006) exemplifies the disconnect between university courses and professional experience placements as the Achilles heel of teacher education.

It has been argued that there is a lack of understanding of each institution's (school and university) structure, culture, organisation and practice, and the research literature is rife with findings that cry of the conceptual, organisational and relational difficulties of university-school partnerships (Le Cornu & Peters, 2009; Lemke & Sebelli, 2008; Lynch & Smith, 2012; Martin, Snow, & Franklin-Torrez, 2011; Smith, 2016). For universities, the focus of teacher education partnerships has been on operational issues such as sourcing and monitoring placements for ITE students (Toon, 2017), rather than engaging in meaningful, substantive relationships that connect the school and university as institutions, and enhance outcomes for both ITE students, and the partnership schools.

The dominant model of the ITE program is designed, taught and administered by the university: historically, a space in which school teachers' contributions are silent and void. The 'place' of the school teacher is seen as 'in the school'; undertaking the role of supervising, supporting and mentoring the ITE student, in context (Brady, 2002; Moran, Abbott, & Clarke, 2009; Fullan, 2007; Smith & Lynch, 2006). However, this arrangement raises the question of the potential loss of the professional value of schools and their teachers, in contributing further to ITE programs. Consequently, the research team have pondered the following questions: How could a university engage with school teachers beyond a supervisory role of their ITE students? Would a closer more interwoven arrangement in which the partners blurred the boundaries of their individual institutions result in deeper engagement for all stakeholders? Is there the potential for partners to teach in each other's educational contexts, resulting in a broadened understanding of the learning environments, and learners? How could an authentic partnership that aimed to increase understanding of university and school cultures and practices related to the preparation of ITE students, be created and sustained?

Here, the work of seminal researchers in the field, point to the disconnect between schools and universities and offer ways to rethink partnerships. Goodlad (1991) states *any teacher education programme created or conducted without the collaboration of surrounding schools is defective* (p. 10). Bhabha (1990) points to the positives and identifies the 'hybrid spaces' in *which two cultures with different traditions and perceptions meet, and through communication and negotiations new understandings emerge* (in Smith, 2016, p. 26). Thus, in this hybrid space, a shared goal and practice of preparing ITE students for the profession may arise as an outcome of effective partnerships. When creating partnerships however, it is essential to recognise that academics and school teachers speak different languages, despite their common goal as teachers. In addition, Weerts and Sandmann (2006) note, that although academics do often engage in research in schools, they are 'out of touch' with the daily realities and needs of secondary schools, teachers and students.

However, there is the potential to bridge temporal, organisational and cultural gaps, when employing school-university partnerships. Effective partnerships may lead to the sharing of knowledge and skills between the institutions and the renewal of the elements of the partnership (Allen, Butler-Mader, & Smith, 2010; Stephens & Boldt, 2004). Partnerships can allow the pooling of resources, sharing expertise and collaborative decision making to enhance the student experience and their learning outcomes (Smith & Lynch, 2002). Furthermore, Zeichner (2010) proffers the notion of a 'bringing together of knowledges' in which the knowledge *of* teaching in schools meets the knowledge *about* teaching in universities.

Underpinning successful partnerships is the notion of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). As a conceptual frame for this research, Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of communities of practice (CoPs) illustrates how two institutions who engage in a common practice or joint enterprise can forge meaningful connections and foster belonging (Henschel, 2000). However, in order to do this, the members require shared understandings, sympathies, and insights of the others' practices. In a true partnership, stakeholders unite to design and facilitate an enterprise. Therefore, the proposed channel to a meaningful partnership between universities

and schools is a joint enterprise, (Lave & Wenger, 1991) aimed at effectively preparing ITE students to transition to the teaching profession and reciprocally building the leadership capacity of partner teachers.

Sanctioned by contemporary Initial Teacher Education Reform strategies, this study has been driven by the call to create mutually beneficial partnerships between universities and schools. A key direction of the Australian Teacher Education Reform report *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers (TEMAG, 2014)*, points to the need for an integrated system incorporating partnerships to *ensure initial teacher education meets the needs of employers and schools* (p. vii). Furthermore, the report hails the current inadequacy of opportunities for initial teacher education students to translate theory to practice: a signal for creating and sustaining quality reciprocal school-university partnerships.

The Hub Project

With this notion of joint enterprise at the fore, the 'Hub project' was conceived. Funded by the NSW Department of Education (NSWDE), the Hub comprised five contributing projects including:

1. a review of the University Teacher Education processes;

2. a school-based review of valuing the practicum;

3. introduction of a technological tool (SWIVL) to assist in reviewing ITE teaching practice and classroom resources pilot;

4. a University and college professional experience teaching partnership; and

5. a professional development mentoring project.

This paper reports on the processes and outcomes of the University and College professional experience teaching partnership. The project teamed an experienced teacher education academic with two secondary school teachers from the local multi-campus College to design and facilitate a third-year professional experience subject in the Bachelor of Education (Health & Physical Education) and Bachelor of Education (K-12) degrees.

Research aims

The aims of this project were to:

1. more authentically prepare ITE students to transition to the teaching profession;

2. provide opportunities for academic staff to view contemporary teacher practice and enhance their understandings of school culture, systems, policies and management; and

3. provide capacity building and leadership opportunities for school teachers.

Team teaching partners

Selection

In 2017, Principals of a multi-campus local secondary government College called for expressions of interest (EOI) from teachers, to participate in the team teaching of a professional experience subject at the local university. The EOI document outlined the role and duties of the partner teachers which included co-designing and team-teaching EPT329 'Working within the Community' subject, team-marking of subject assessment tasks, and providing weekly reflections regarding their role. In addition, the teachers created and led mentoring and leadership workshops for their colleagues in their campus schools, to assist

them to supervise the Hub ITE students, and share their experiences teaching at the university.

Principals accommodated the teachers' involvement in the university subjects by adjusting teachers' school timetables to allow for one day a week release time to teach at the university. Two teachers (one from each campus) were competitively selected by a panel of university and school staff, inducted into the processes and technology platforms of the university and commenced their involvement in the project in late July 2017.

The academic involved in the project volunteered to teach the subject, as she had previously taught in the professional experience strand of subjects. Her decision was largely based on her teaching philosophy that drew on the notions of authentic learning, and her extensive experience in secondary schools, as a teacher, and supervising teacher of multiple ITE students.

Tasks of the team

Designing and teaching the subject

The initial tasks of the teaching team included reviewing the previous session's subject experience survey (SES) scores and subject outline. These data, together with shared teacher and academic dialogue, informed the design of the forthcoming professional experience subject. The six two-hour workshops aimed to provide ITE students with authentic examples of classroom practice thus providing insights into the complex realties of teaching and the nature of young people. The resultant workshop topics scaffolded ITE students' knowledge of schools and policies, embellished with meaningful and contemporary examples drawn from the teachers' practice and knowledge *of* schools. For example, the teachers illustrated their approaches to building rapport with, and disciplining students, and liaising with executive staff members. Additionally, the teachers explicitly modelled behaviour management strategies, shared teaching strategies and called on ITE students to team teach aspects of each week's workshop: a rehearsal opportunity which provided practice in facilitating syllabus content to their future learners. The academic overlaid the facilitation with connections between university subjects that students were currently studying and drew on her knowledge of the Teacher Education degree to ignite meaningful connections between theory and classroom practice. Reflective practice was a key feature of each workshop and provided opportunities for the ITE students, the teachers and the academic to reflect on their experiences in the project. The workshops were designed to be highly interactive, and given there were three facilitators, a breadth of teaching strategies and facilitation styles were employed.

Weekly preparation and reflection

Prior to each workshop, the academic and the teachers met to discuss and design the following week's content, allocate tasks, teaching strategies, and assign roles to each member to facilitate aspects of the two-hour workshop. Often, the teachers and academic 'fed off each other' as they facilitated ITE student discussion and other learning activities: adding crucial elements from practice or theory to integrate the knowledges *of* and *about* teaching.

Furthermore, each week the teaching team debriefed and engaged in formal narrative reflection that provided insight regarding the efficacy of the week's workshop and students' engagement. These reflections also acted as a primary data source for the action research aligned with this project.

Marking

As a further duty the teaching team co-marked each of the subject assessments that included ITE students writing SMART goals for the upcoming professional experience placement and creating a professional portfolio that illustrated students' achievement of the Australian Institute of Teacher Standards and Leadership (AITSL) graduate standards. The process of co-marking drew on the rich in-context knowledge of the teachers, together with the theoretical insights of the academic's grasp of the AITSL documents.

Supervision contact within Hub schools

In addition, the teachers were charged with the role of contact mentors within their home campuses of the College. This role required the teachers to act as a first port of call for the ITE students, many of whom were intentionally placed in the two Hub campuses. The teachers acted as a sounding board rather than in a supervisory capacity; offering support and professional advice when the ITE student found lessons, procedures or students challenging. The contact mentors were tasked with inducting the ITE students into the organisation, administrative, structural and political requirements of the school contexts.

Collegial mentoring

In their role as partners, the teachers were invited by their home campus Principals to design and facilitate mentoring and leadership professional development opportunities for their colleagues. The aims of the professional development were to raise awareness of the culture, knowledges and practices of the university, by sharing their experiences and insights of the Hub project and build capacity of other College teachers to participate in the project.

Conceptual framework

Communities of practice (CoPs) was the term coined by Lave and Wenger (1991) to describe the situated learning model of apprentices. Learning as a situated practice involves communities of practitioners sharing understandings and experiences relating to particular domains of knowledge. Participating in these domains is how people learn: constructing, sharing and applying knowledge to a specific practice. In this case, the practice is teaching, and the sharing of practice includes the practices of the ITE students, the partner teachers and the academic. According to Wenger (2002) a community of practice consists of:

> *groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis … (as they) accumulate knowledge, they become informally bound by the value they find in learning together. Over time, they develop a unique perspective on their topic as well as a body of common knowledge, practices and approaches. They also develop personal relationships and establish ways of interacting. They may even develop a common sense of identity. They become a community of practice* (p. 4-5)*.*

In this paper, communities of practice act as a helpful framework to investigate, understand and explain the dynamics of a school-university partnership centred around the practice of initial teacher education. A community of practice is based on collective expertise: it offers opportunities for participants to co-construct knowledge by inviting them to *share, build upon, and transform what they know about effective practice* (Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley, 2003, p. 265). In order to understand the workings of a community of practice, we need to investigate its three defining characteristics: shared repertoire, mutual engagement and joint enterprise.

Shared repertoire

A shared repertoire is a set of resources that members use to engage in, make meaning of, and refine their practice. Members share a cultural context for their work. The Hub Project as a CoP, shares a history associated with the practice *of* teaching, the socio-historical influences *on* teaching and the value attributed *to* the practice of teaching.

Mutual engagement

Wenger (1998) suggests that members of a CoP participate in a shared domain of interest. In a CoP, shared competence is valued. Interactions between members are encouraged in order to distribute knowledge and create solutions to problems. Members of the Hub Project CoP have formed relationships around their engagement with and interest in teacher education, and teaching. They participate in knowledge sharing at university or school and draw on the expertise of overlapping communities of practice.

Joint enterprise

Members of a CoP participate in joint tasks and activities and negotiate meaning of their practice through shared solutions: their practice is communally negotiated. In the case of the Hub Project, the interaction of three stakeholders in the university classroom lends itself to shared and negotiated workshop content and facilitation strategies. The enterprise is informed by the CoP members' perspectives of their overlapping communities.

Boundary members

The Hub Project CoP includes what Wenger terms 'boundary members' (1998) who work on the periphery of multiple CoPs. The purpose of boundary crossing is to bring together academic and teacher knowledge in a synergistic way in support of ITE student learning. In this case, all the members are boundary workers of overlapping CoPS: the teachers cross both the physical and intellectual borders from the school to the university; the ITE students straddle the school-university boundaries, and transfer their university understandings *about* schools to the teaching *in* schools; and lastly the academic, is challenged when positioned on the borders of school practice: albeit within the comfort of the physical environment of the university.

Research design

The research design was constituted by mixed methods that allowed for comparative analysis and provided a depth of understanding of the participants' responses through a layering process of statistical and qualitative data. Multiple data sources were used to determine the efficacy of the project aims. Gay, Mills and Airasian (2012) claim that mixed method research *builds on the synergy and strength that exists between quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to understand a phenomenon more fully than is possible using either quantitative or qualitative methods alone* (p. 481).

Data sources and tools

Teacher partners

The two teachers from the separate campuses of the local College formed the sample for the interviews. The teachers varied in age, teaching experiences, subject content areas, Teacher Education qualifying degrees, and had diverse teaching and life experiences from each other. The disparate nature of the teacher sample, albeit only two, added to both the complexity and authenticity of the project.

Semi structured interviews were undertaken with the teachers, pre- and post- their teaching the professional experience subject. Semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility to pose probing questions when seeking further information and for clarification by the interviewee (Burns, 2000). The interview schedule opened with demographic questions and further proceeded with the teachers' impressions of the efficacy of the Hub Project, particularly in relation to the connection between the learning environments and the outcomes for the ITE students, and their leadership capacity. The interviews were conducted during Week 1 and Week 14 of the university session (pre- and post-teaching the subject content) by the project lead, in his office, on a day when the partner teachers were scheduled to be at the university. The interviews were audio recorded to retain data and transcribed by a professional company. Additionally, the partner teachers prepared weekly reflections, written as a narrative, after the facilitation of each workshop with the ITE students. These reflections were submitted by email to both the academic partner and the project lead each week. The nature of the reflections related to the content, students' engagement and evaluation of constraints and successes. Ethical clearance was approved by the University Human Research Ethics Committee to undertake the research project.

Initial teacher education students

In order to capture the student voice, the following measures were undertaken, from a sample of 38 Bachelor of Education (Health & Physical Education) and Bachelor of Education (K-12) degree students in their third year of a four-year degree. The data were gathered from late July to October 2018. For the K-12 students, EPT329 was their first exposure to learning about secondary schools and engaging in a professional experience placement in a secondary school. The Health and Physical Education (HPE) students had previously engaged in two five-week placements in secondary schools.

As an initial workshop activity in Week 1 of the session (July 2018), the ITE responded in Blog postings to a series of questions that explored their understandings and expectations of the Hub Project. The questions included:

1. What is the nature and purpose of the Hub Project?
2. How can the Hub staff contribute to your learning in EPT329?
3. Why is establishing connections between schools and universities important?

The ITE students formally consented to the use of these data in the action research aspect of the project. Thus, their Blog postings acted as initial or baseline data to represent one CoP members' perspective. As a further data source, the ITE students were required to complete the university subject experience survey (SES) at the end of the teaching session (October 2018). The SES comprises 16 mandatory questions and employs a 5-point Likert scale using a continuum from 'to a very large extent' to 'to a very small extent'. Additionally, students responded to two open-ended questions that sought their feedback regarding the 'most helpful aspects of the subject' and 'the least helpful aspects of the subject'. The SES survey was a highly respected form of data throughout the university in that it was cost effective, expected in the normal proceedings of university life, students were aware of the nature and purpose of the questions and thus required minimal clarification as to their intent. The survey had been validated and was reliable across years, cohorts and subjects. As with all surveys, completion rate was a potential research issue. In order to maximise data collection, the teaching team administered the SES in the final week tutorial after ITE students completed their placement. Students were requested to bring a mobile device to the workshop to use to complete the survey. The survey completion was voluntary, and students who did not wish to participate, continued with the prescribed tutorial work, thus not identifying their non-completion. The survey was completed during Week 14 of the session. Survey completion time averaged 8 minutes.

The academic

To ensure data were gathered from all participating members of the Hub Project CoP, the academic prepared a journal of evaluative statements and a narrative after each week's workshop. The framework to guide the reflection included responding to the following questions: What happened? What did I do and feel? How did others respond to my actions? So what? Now what?

The journal acted as a secondary source of data against which to triangulate the ITE students' and teacher partners' statistical and interview responses. Journaling provides rich data and has been described as a legitimate and valued method for qualitative data collection *due to its richness, depth and extension of information* (Friedemann, Mayorga, & Jimenez, 2011, p. 2).

Data analysis

The partner teacher interview data, ITE student Blog postings and open-ended survey questions were analysed using coding and intra- and inter-textual analysis to determine themes (Burns, 2000). Data driven coding (Saldana, 2013) was used as the principle analysis method. Preliminary codes were initially assigned to the raw data (interview transcripts), followed by assigning a final code that was thematically driven from the initial codes. Coding was a way of indexing or categorizing the text in the interview transcripts to create a framework of themes (Gibbs, 2007). These data were compared with the academic's reflective narrative to determine commonalities.

The SES results were analysed by the university data unit, using descriptive measures including means, percentages and percentiles. Subject means were identified for each of the mandatory 16 items and compared with each subject located in the University's School. The SES output was released to the academic after the close of the university session in late October 2018.

Results

The findings of the research are presented in sections aligned with members of the community of practice: teachers, ITE students and the academic. Furthermore, the results present both the benefits and challenges of the project, as perceived by each of the member groups, of the Hub Project Community of Practice.

Initial teacher education students

A range of themes arose from the data analysis of the open-ended survey questions and Blog postings. These themes included:

1. Partner teachers' contemporary classroom knowledge;

2. Realistic expectations of secondary school environments; and

3. Increased confidence and readiness to participate in professional placement.

Theme 1: Teachers' contemporary classroom knowledge

Initial teacher education students highly valued the teachers' knowledge and experience. The ITE students realised that as Ferns, Campbell and Zegwaard (2014) stated the boundaries of the university and the community should be blurred. While being mindful to respect the knowledges gained from their university studies, the ITE students overwhelming voiced the significant credence appointed to the currency and authenticity of the practice of the teachers. In this 'third space' (Zeichner, 2010), the knowledges of both the teachers and the academic are treated with mutual respect. The following quotes illustrate these findings:

[the academic] has always gone above and beyond to ensure we are learning relevant content that we can use in our future careers, now we are having real live teachers in the class which was great. They all have so much to offer in different ways (P27).

It was good to have the teachers with real life experience come in and share their experiences. A lot of subjects at uni are taught by lecturers who have limited, outdated or no field experience (P1).

The teaching staff being able to use relevant experiences from their current teaching. The use of team teaching in the subject was very effective as it allowed all teachers to share their different experiences from the classroom. These teachers were also able to give further information on areas of content that needed clarification (P7).

I think the collaboration between CSU and the College is very beneficial for us as we are offered insight and experience from current teachers (P9).

It was refreshing having more than one teacher involved and those that were involved really knew their stuff. They were experts in their field and really approachable (P24).

The ITE students further acknowledged the importance of gaining different perspectives of teaching from the two teachers during the workshops. From the discussions in workshops, the different nature of the two campuses from which the teachers were drawn, was certainly obvious to the ITE students. These differences assisted the ITE students to understand the importance of the teaching context, as valued teacher knowledge. Students stated:

Everything seemed to work well, and more teachers was a much better arrangement as I was able to gather multiple opinions and views from the same subject (P23).

The team teaching was very valuable! Having all 3 staff members working together was great. They bounced off each other and presented theory and practice in different ways and together. There were huge differences between uni and the schools, and between [emphasis added] the schools, but now we understand why (P2).

From the perspective of communities of practice, the ITE students - those with legitimate peripheral participation in the teaching profession - highly valued the notion of learning about the secondary teachers' breadth of experiences. Wenger (1998) points to the need for those on the boundaries of practice, to be exposed to the full realities of the profession's practice.

Theme 2: Realistic expectations of secondary school environments

A pertinent comment from a student illustrated the honesty of the teachers when discussing the role of a teacher. Valuable insights into the role of the contemporary classroom teacher, with its challenges and joys, were shared with the ITE students. Students genuinely appreciated the fidelity of dialogue with the teachers as seen in the following comments:

They were very honest about the role of a teacher and were always responsive to our questions providing personal experiences and management strategies (P6).

The teachers got everyone engaged and involved in one way or the other, helping us understand the different elements of secondary school teaching (P2).

Bringing school teachers into university to give students first hand insight into what teaching in a school is really like (P18).

Furthermore, the students appreciated the breadth of teaching and management strategies which were modelled in the workshops. This modelling further showcased the teachers' contemporary practice and assisted students to feel prepared for their upcoming professional experience placements, as they were now keenly aware of what would be expected in regard

to facilitating lessons and managing student behaviour in a secondary classroom. Students' comments highlight the invaluable modelling of how to deal with the secondary school environment as follows:

> *Working with the teachers provided a great insight into secondary teaching* (P17).

> *This subject provided me with a toolkit to go to my next placement with strategies to manage the classroom and getting to know how students learn* (P11).

> *The HUB project was an invaluable experience that provided me with the opportunity to experience quality, contemporary teaching* (P15).

> *The HUB project was valuable as the teachers shared their real and current knowledge of classroom management* (P8).

> *… some realistic advice and a current view into the teaching profession* (P21).

Here Wenger (1998) would suggest that the ITE students were undergoing 'an apprenticeship of observation' as they viewed the modelled practices of the experienced teachers.

Theme 3: Increased confidence and readiness to participate in professional placement

As evidenced by the ITE students' responses, it was overtly clear that they were feeling more confident, and were prepared to transition to the teaching profession, as a direct outcome of the Hub Project. The ITE students' comments highlight their depth of understanding of the teaching context, lessened anxiety levels, increased repertoire of teaching strategies, enhanced perceived ability to manage student behaviour, and their 'readiness' to assume a teaching role in a secondary classroom. Students' state:

> *I feel more prepared for my practicum now than I have with previous EPT subjects* (P30).

> *Before this subject I was apprehensive about teaching in a secondary school yet interacting with the teachers allowed me to think more widely about my placement. I feel confident into my next placement as I have been able to identify what I would like to work on and include into my SMART goals. Having teachers work with us has focused the placement around learning how to teach in a classroom environment and has made me less anxious to go to prac* (P12).

> *This project was beneficial as I have become more confident and prepared for a placement* (P31).

> *The content of each tutorial and how it was presented was excellent. I believe much of what I learnt in this class will significantly help me in my future studies and my teaching career* (P4.)

Interestingly the ITE students realised their development as they progressed through the degree and were now 'seeing themselves' as beginning teachers as they established a professional identity. One student states:

> *I loved that the teachers came into the uni and loved that we were treated like teachers. I was able to see my own development from my first EPT subjects in my professional portfolio assessment. I see that I have 'become' a teacher* (P23).

As the ITE students participate in the community of practice, albeit practices modelled by experienced teachers in a university context, their sense of belonging and professional identity develops and grows (Wenger, 1998).

Table 1: Subject Experience Survey

	Expected	Received	This subject prepared me to participate in the work placement.	The work placement provided me with the learning experiences required by this subject.	The learning activities in this subject prepared me to complete my assessment tasks.	The learning resources in this subject supported my learning in the work placement.	The assessment tasks in this subject allowed me to demonstrate my workplace learning.	This subject helped me formulate goals that were related to my professional development.
201660	n=31	n=7	14.3%	71.4%	57.1%	57.1%	57.1%	42.9%
201860	n=38	n=35	100%	100%	66.6%	66.6%	100%	100%

*The percentages relate to the number of students who responded with "to a very large extent" or "to a large extent" to each of the questions.

In addition to the qualitative data the subject experience survey Likert scale results illustrate the positive contribution of the Hub Project to ITE students' preparedness to transition to the teaching profession. Table 1 illustrates the comparison between the subject experience survey results from 2016 (pre-Hub Project) and 2018 (post-Hub Project). The survey items changed from 2016-2018 so the comparison was drawn between common items only.

Teacher

The analysis of the teacher interviews revealed multiple themes relevant to both the teachers and the ITE students. Themes included:

1. Mentoring and leadership roles at school;
2. Improvements in personal practice;
3. Enhanced awareness of ITE students' needs, expectations and knowledge; and
4. Enhanced confidence and readiness for classroom reality.

The themes are presented as benefits and challenges for the ITE students and the partner teachers themselves. Here it is important to recognise the complex inter-relationship between teachers and the ITE students. As participants in a community of practice, relationships are formed based on the participants' interactions, sharing of experiences associated with their common professional activities (Wenger, 1998).

Benefits for the teachers

Theme 1: Mentoring and leadership roles at school

The pre-pilot interview data revealed that both teachers were expecting to further develop and refine their leadership skills through their participation in the Hub Project. As an initial aim of the research, it was pleasing to hear the acknowledgement of this leadership development, as a goal for the teachers. The teachers stated:

> *I think I'll learn more skills as far as awareness of the accreditation requirements and develop leadership skills* (PT1).

> *I am hoping to further develop my ability to mentor and lead others in my school* (PT2).

After participation in the Hub Project, the teachers recognised their enhanced ability to lead others and were charged with the task of mentoring their colleagues who were responsible for

supervising ITE students during professional placement. The following quote illustrates the opportunity afforded one of the teachers:

> *I think one of the benefits is, my principal has started tapping into me in a mentoring role for beginner teachers as well. He is thinking of this role is as "Okay if you're going to be at uni teaching students then supporting them when they come to the school, you can also start to support beginning teachers". I have started inviting beginning teachers into my room to view my lessons and classes. To watch me teach, and also for me to go into their rooms and start giving them some support and coaching. This has been a natural flow on effect from being involved in the project* (PT1).

Theme 2: Improvements in personal practice

Weekly facilitation of the workshops provided opportunities for the teachers to re-assess their own practice. A resultant, but rather unexpected outcome, was the enhanced level of reflective practice in which the teachers now engaged. The teachers acknowledged that there had been reciprocal learning, in that they had learnt from the ITE students during the partnership. Partner teacher 2 stated:

> *It has re-ignited me … made me think a little bit more, critically analyse what it is that I do, look at how it is that I can incorporate things that I am talking about with the students, how I can hone those a little bit more, I suppose because I'm thinking about them instead of just doing them. I have now looked into the Standards far more than I have ever before, and I've got some new resources and found some new things out that were actually really beneficial, like the sites for differentiation learnt from the other teacher as well as the ITE students.*

Theme 3: Enhanced awareness of ITE students' needs, expectations and knowledge

One of the identified points of disconnect between the university and the partner schools, was a lack of communication and understanding of the nature of the university degrees, and the preparedness of the ITE students to participate in professional experience. Schools, because of their previous silenced position in the design and implementation of the professional experience subjects, had little knowledge of contemporary teacher education degrees, which resulted in teachers holding differing expectations of ITE students' knowledge, skills and abilities. Partner teacher 1 states:

> *I've definitely learnt a lot. I think from a school's perspective, having an understanding of what's happening at the uni, and that constant contact with the uni students, gives me a really clear understanding of what their knowledge is, what level they're operating at, and what support they need going into schools. Having one prac student at a time, in the past, has narrowed my perspective of what they're experiencing and what their needs are, whereas now I've been in a room with 38 of them!*

Partner teacher 2 expresses:

> *I think I am more prepared this time than I have been for any praccie that I've had before because I've gone through the process and gone "well, you know what… they need this and this". The project has increased awareness and knowledge between the two institutions.*

Benefits for ITE students

Theme 4: Enhanced confidence and readiness for classroom reality

The teachers were acutely aware of the increased confidence levels of the ITE students as they progressed throughout the session. The engagement in discussions regarding the role of

the teacher in a secondary school, and the requirements of professional accreditation formed critical aspects of each workshop. These discussions were highlighted with explicit and authentic examples from the partner teachers' practice, and each emphasised the importance of viewing teaching as a profession. A significant and highly positive outcome was the enhanced confidence and professional maturity of the ITE students. Partner teacher 1 states:

> *Having that constant to and fro about their professional practise with a current teacher, I just feel like their confidence levels have increased. So having people who are actually doing that, having six periods a day, being realistic about what goes on in a school, I think is invaluable for the students. They have been so engaged and are now so mature in their thinking and approach. They are acting like teachers. I think the students are more 'ready' to undertake their professional placement. By providing them with real examples of everyday teaching, they can see what is required of a teacher. I have tried to model professionalism and now they can understand that teaching is a profession with standards. They have grown significantly throughout the workshops.*

Given a significant aim of the project was to more authentically prepare ITE students to transition to the teaching profession, it is clearly evident from the perspectives of the teachers that this aim has been achieved.

Benefits for the academic

The academic involved in the project had not taught in secondary contexts for over 15 years. As such, her knowledge of contemporary classrooms was gleaned from her ITE students' accounts of their experiences during professional experience placements. As a result of her involvement in the planning meetings, and by viewing the teachers modelling their own teaching practice in schools, the academic's understandings of school policy and the complex nature of contemporary classrooms was heightened. The teachers shared technologies, education system policies and examples of their own accreditation documentation. These glimpses into the everyday work of contemporary teachers has resulted in the academic reflecting on the possibilities for subject redesign, and creating further opportunities for other academics, removed from the current school context, to participate in the team-teaching experience. The academic noted in her journal:

> *I was confronted by the accounts of practice of dealing with young people in today's classrooms. I know I don't have the skills anymore to be a classroom teacher, because of the changed nature of schools and classrooms. I had until now, prided myself on still being connected to schools through consultancy and curriculum work, however, the project has opened my eyes to the realities of what happens in secondary classrooms and the complexities of young people's lives. This has been a reality check for me and I think that it is very important for my colleagues, many of whom are very disconnected from schools, some of whom have never taught in a classroom, to be involved in this project. I have some ideas of how we might expand the team teaching. Academics should not be teaching professional experience subjects without knowing what schools and young people are like. I have learnt so much, new ways of engaging students, software to create resources, about positive behaviours for learning,…things I never knew about policy.*

The aim to provide opportunities for academic staff to view contemporary teacher practice and enhance their understandings of school culture, systems, policies and management was, as evidenced by the academic's journal narrative, certainly achieved. However, as will be highlighted in the discussion section, further exposure to schools and their processes is needed.

Challenges

A number of challenges were highlighted by all members of the Hub Project community of practice. These challenges related to the place of theory in workshops, the perceived inequity experienced by some ITE students, the differences in expectations of the working environments, and relationships and power.

Awareness of the place of theory

An enduring criticism of university degrees by teachers in general, has been the emphasis on theory, rather than practice (Le Cornu & Peters, 2009; Lynch & Smith, 2012). Each institution commonly adopts firmly-held beliefs regarding their role in contributing to the preparation of ITE students (Botha & Beets, 2015). Interestingly, the place of theory in the workshops became a contested topic of discussion *between* the partner teachers and caused considerable tension in planning meetings. Teacher 1 illustrated her frustration with her school colleagues' lack of engagement with theory as follows:

> *I think that it is important for people involved in the project to be aware of and respectful of the place and importance of the theory that underpins everything that we do because this attitude of, 'once you've left uni leave all that [theory] behind, come and do the real learning in the classroom', that is false. It's been an interesting experience being a part of this because there are professionals who still want to refute the place that the theory has in teaching practice, they just want to look at the application of day to day teaching, but they don't want to acknowledge that the teaching is informed by theory.*

This tension resulted in redesigning the roles of each of the teachers, in regard to what and how each partner teacher would facilitate their section of the weekly workshops.

Insufficient places at the College

One of teachers acknowledged the Hub Project as 'enriching' and identified the concern for those students who were not placed at either of the College campuses for their placement. This is a pertinent issue to consider for future student placements. However, the increasing number of ITE students in the degrees needing to be placed, does significantly draw on the professional generosity of both College campuses. Broadening of the net of schools involved in the Hub Project acts as a solution to the inequity of placement context for future ITE students:

> *I think the students who go to the College for placement, I think their experience is much more enriching. I'm concerned for the students who aren't involved in the project. As one of the students stated during a workshop 'this is all well and good but I'm not going to the College I'm going elsewhere for placement'.*

This lack of equity was acknowledged by ITE students as follows:

> *I get that there are only so many places in the Hub schools, but I feel like I am missing out on very important relationships and conversations by going elsewhere for my prac* (P17).

Relationships and power

A difficult and complex issue that arose was related to professional relationships, and power. The teachers' professional and personal experiences were what could be described as 'polarised'. The extreme differences in their teaching philosophies, approaches and identities resulted in difficult conversations at times, and opposing opinions.

Teacher 1 noted that the type or nature of the teacher undertaking the role of facilitator with the ITE students was paramount, emphasising the importance of selecting appropriate teachers for the project. The teacher states:

> *If it's the wrong person delivering the content, I think it loses the focus, of what we're all trying to achieve.*

Both teachers acknowledged the strains of working together. Teacher 2 pointed out that *working with two teachers has been a bit of a challenge*. However, the teacher concluded:

> *We got there in the end. We had very different ideas about how to deliver and what to deliver, and there were some activities that I had to push really hard to deliver in the classroom.*

In addition, there was a perceived power differential between the partner teachers and the academic. During the planning meetings and workshops, it was obvious that the teachers deferred to the academic in terms of university policy, degree structure and expectations. The academic's knowledge was obviously privileged and seen as authoritative (Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003). Conversely, the academic deferred to the teachers when discussing classroom practice and secondary school students. Partner teacher 2 illustrates this power relationship as follows:

> *I've found the three members ... you know we've got the university representative and then the two teachers, having that three-way relationship, it's been challenging because you've got the school and you've got the university, and obviously they're very different work environments and they've got very different cultures, and bringing them together … has been challenging. At times, I wasn't sure where I fitted in.*

This practice of deferring, actually represented a space in which academic and teacher knowledge was shared and valued. A space in which there was reciprocal and transformational learning (Gutierrez, 2008).

Differences in working environments

As boundary workers in the Hub Project CoP, the teachers experienced a 'clash of culture' (PT2) as they negotiated the rules, and practices of the university learning environment. Both teachers recognised and struggled with the differences between aspects of the university's work, pace and focus, when comparing it with that of their schools. The teachers and the academic acknowledged the 'parallel universes' (PT1) from which the members of the community of practice drew their values and practices. The teachers described their impressions of the environments as follows:

> *The two very different work and learning environments, and bringing them together, there's been some challenges. Navigating where students are up to in their courses… what subjects they have already studied … what they know before they go on placement. How I am supposed to work on that in this short space of time (PT2).*

> *So when you're looking at a collegial group, if you haven't got an even balance from two different, I'm going to use the word cultural backgrounds, because the cultures in the two environments are so different. I felt like there's been a resistance to, there's a school way of doing things and there's a uni way of doing things, and they are different. But I've worked really hard at bridging the two. I am employed by my school but I am working at the university. When you are at uni you are under the same rules as every other university employee, but you work there [at school] (PT1).*

For the academic, the physical environment in which she was working was certainly one of comfort and familiarity in regard to expectations, procedures and practices. However, she too was challenged by the task of team teaching with experienced and current classroom

teachers. Her environment, until now had been filled with practice relating to theory, peppered with examples from classroom experiences which were more than a decade old. In this regard, the teachers acted as conduits between the classroom and the university. Their boundary work was to negotiate the practices, cultures and identities of *both* classroom teacher and academic facilitator. They acted as models of teaching and professionalism, providing relevant real insights into everyday practices, sharing tips and hints, and creating links for students to forge the ever-increasing gap between university and the authentic classroom experience.

Discussion

This paper has reported on the efficacy of a school-university partnership in which teachers brokered across the boundaries of the university landscape. As evidenced in the results, the partnership was effective, as the members began to develop a common understanding of practice, shared vision for ITE students and the teaching profession, and mutually respected each other's expertise (Halvorsen, 2014).

For the teachers, the project allowed them to draw on their knowledges from their overlapping CoPs in schools and model the practice of teaching to the ITE students. In doing so, they were acutely aware of their peripheral positioning in the university CoP, reflecting their initial membership identity, and legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). However, the balance of power came from the teachers' heightened experience and credibility in the school context (Wenger, 1998). For both the academic and the ITE students, this power associated with classroom expertise, was respected and valued.

Wenger (1998) notes that CoPs operate as a collective in which members co-construct knowledge that is meaningful and useful to their work. In this case, the knowledge of schools was held by the teachers, while the knowledge of universities was held by the academic. During the work of the partnership, neither knowledge was more highly legitimised or valued. The boundary workers, in this case, were the ITE students as they navigated their understandings of the culture, identities and knowledges of both settings to meet their professional learning needs.

The ITE students were quickly subsumed into the College's community of practice. Together with their five-week professional placement, the Hub Project provided them with in-roads to the authentic practice of teachers and schools. The depth of experiences offered in the Hub Project allowed the ITE students a safer and more efficient transition when gaining access to the school CoPs. As legitimate peripheral participants in a practice, they had already viewed examples of the community's activities from the teachers in the Hub Project. As Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest, to be accepted as a full participant in a community, the newcomer must have *access to a wide range of ongoing activity, old timers, and other members of the community; and to information, resources, and opportunities for participation* (p. 101).

The ITE students were overtly aware of the realities of practice, the expectations of their supervising teachers, the culture of schools, and the nature of young people. The Hub Project exposed ITE students to the authenticity of classroom practice, through explicit modelling of and dialoguing about what ITE students need to know, need to do, and what they should expect.

For the academic, the Hub Project offered the opportunity to re-assess the currency of knowledge of school procedures and policies, and the culture of schools. While the academic's curriculum knowledge was contemporary, her understandings of schools was based on her historical teaching positions in the 1990s. Her involvement in the Hub Project alerted her to the acute and changed complexities of young people's lives and their influence on teaching. Furthermore, the increased requirements of continual professional learning, the significant demands of administrative tasks, and the need to meaningfully relate to the school community were certainly lessons for the academic. The academic became a border worker as well, as

she engaged in dialogue with university colleagues regarding the 'realness' that the teachers brought to the subject, to the ITE students' experiences and in raising the academic's awareness of the nature of 21st century young people and their social and educational needs.

Conclusion

The Hub CoP provided opportunities for all members to share knowledge, skills and understandings during their mutual engagement in the weekly workshops. Participation in the workshops: albeit a microcosm of the teaching profession, provided the ITE students with the opportunity to learn of the culture of schools: their conventions, codes of conduct, and rules (Wenger, 1998) as the teachers modelled contemporary practice and shared experiences with both the academic and ITE students. Reciprocally, the teachers from the College engaged in dialogue with both the ITE students and the academic: creating learning spaces for development of new knowledges of university practice and building leadership capacity in an overlapping community of practice.

Despite the identified challenges, the partnership could indeed be viewed as effective and successful. The community of practice members acknowledged and celebrated the disparate cultures of the each other's practice, creating bridges into each other's worlds. This negotiation of practice, culture and identity, assisted members to weave links *across [their] landscape of practice* (Wenger, 1998, p. 61).

The future of the project lies with the issues of upscaling and sustainability beyond the funded model. The possibilities for the future call for *the university to change shape and purpose to become a place of sharing, collaboration and cooperation …* (Ferns & Lilly, 2015, p.2).

References

Allen, J. M., Bulter- Mader, C., & Smith, R. A. (2010). A fundamental partnership: The experiences of practising teachers as lecturers in a pre-service teacher education programme. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 16*(5), 615–632. doi: 10.1080/13540602.2010.507969

Bhabha, H. (1990). The third space. In J. Rutherford. (Ed*.). Identity, community, culture and difference* (pp. 207–211). London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Bootha, M. L., & Beets, P. (2015). Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education, *Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Teaching Practice/Didactics Symposium*.

Brady, L. (2002). School university partnerships: What do the schools want? *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 27*(1), 1–9.

Burns, R. (2000). (4th ed.). *Introduction to Research Methods*. London: Sage.

Buysse, V., Sparkman, K. L., & Wesley, P. W. (2003). Communities of practice: Connecting what we know with what we do. *Exceptional Children, 69*(3), 263–277.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). *Powerful teacher education.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Ferns, S., & Lilly, L. (2015). Driving institutional engagement in WIL: Enhancing graduate employability. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, *6*(1), 116–133.

Ferns, S., Campbell, M., & Zegwaard, K. (2014). Work integrated learning. In S. Ferns (Ed.). *Work integrated learning in the curriculum HERDSA Guide. NSW: Higher Education, Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA).*

Friedemann, M. L., Mayorga, C., & Jimenez, L. D. (2011). Data collectors' field journals as tools for research. *Journal Research in Nursing, 16*(5): doi: 10.1177/1744987110387319

Fullan, M. (2007). *The New meaning of educational changes.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. (2012). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications.* (10th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education.

Gibbs, G. R. (2007). Thematic coding and categorizing, Analysing qualitative data. London: Sage. http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781849208574

Goodlad, J. I. (1993). School -university partnerships and partner schools. *Education Policy, 7*(1), 24–39.

Gutierrez, K. (2008). Developing sociocultural literacy in the third space. *Reading Quarterly, 43*(2), 148–164.

Halvorsen, K. (2014). *Partnerships in Teacher Education.* Doctoral Thesis. Bergen: University of Bergen.

Henschel, P. (2001). The manager's core work in the knowledge economy. *On the Horizon, 9*, 2–5.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). Situated Learning: Legitimate peripheral participants. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Le Cornu, R., & Peters, J. (2009). Sustaining school-university collaboration for reciprocal learning. *The International Journal of Learning, 16*(9), 231–246.

Lemke, J. L., & Sabelli, N. H. (2008). Complex systems and educational change: Towards a new research agenda. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 40*(1), 118–129.

Lynch, D., & Smith, R. (2012). Teacher education partnerships: An Australian perspective. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 37*(11), 8.

Martin, S. D., Snow, J. L., & Franklin Torrez, G. A. (2011). Navigating the terrain of third space: Tensions with/in relationships in school-university partnerships. *Journal of Teacher Education, 62*(3), 346–311.

Moran, A., Abbott, L., & Clarke, L. (2009). Reconceptualizing partnerships across the teacher education continuum. *Teachers and Teacher Education*, 25, 951–958.

Moss, J. (2008). Leading professional learning in an Australian secondary school through school-university partnerships. *Asia Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 36*, 345–357.

Saldana, J. (2013). The coding manual for qualitative researchers. (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Smagorinsky, P., Cook, L. S., & Johnston, T. S. (2003). The twisting path of concept

development in learning to teach. *Teachers College Record, 105*(8), 1399–1436.

Smith, K. (2016). Partnerships in teacher education – going beyond the rhetoric, with reference to the Norwegian context. *CEPS, 6*(3), 17–36.

Smith, R. A., & Lynch, D. E. (2002). Bachelor of Learning Management: A teacher-training course. *Classroom, 22*(5), 26–27.

Stephens, D., & Boldt, G. (2004). School/university partnerships: Rhetoric, reality and intimacy. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *85*, 703–708.

Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group. (TEMAG). (2014). *Action now: Classroom ready teachers*. Canberra: Australian Government. Available online at: https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/action_now_classroom_ready_teachers_accessible.pdf

Toon, D. (2017). Deep school and teacher education partnerships can be done: Here's how. Retrieved from https://learningfirst.com/deep-school-teacher-education-partnerships-can-be-done-heres

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Weerts, D.J., & Sandmann, L. R. (2006). Building a two way street: Toward a theory of knowledge flow in university-community partnerships. Paper presented at the *Annual Conference for the Association for the Study of Higher Education*, Anaheim, CA.

Zeichner, K. (2010). Rethinking the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college and university- based education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*(1-2), 89–99.