

Australian Teacher Education Association
Annual Conference Proceedings Archive



Please cite this paper as:

Arnold, J., & Edwards, T. (2009). *Crossing borders – Teacher education in context – putting pedagogy in its place*. Refereed paper presented at ‘Teacher education crossing borders: Cultures, contexts, communities and curriculum’, the annual conference of the Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA), Albury, 28 June–1 July.

Published by: Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA)

Stable URL: https://atea.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2009_arnold_and_edwards.pdf

Review Status: Refereed – *Abstract and Full Paper blind peer reviewed.*
 Non-Refereed – *Abstract Only reviewed.*

Peer Review Refereeing Process:

The conference committee for the annual conference of the Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA) facilitates the review of all papers for admission to the conference. Abstracts for all papers presented are reviewed by the organising committee as to suitability for presentation as research at the annual conference, but full paper refereeing is optional. Only papers actually presented at the conference are published on the ATEA website.

Refereed papers were subject to a thorough and anonymous peer review process that involved a blind review of the research publication in its entirety by independent qualified experts from the field of teacher education. Provisionally accepted papers were returned to the author/s for revision before inclusion in the conference proceedings. The refereeing system was administered by the ATEA Conference Convenor and committee, and conducted independent of the ATEA Executive Committee, which does not influence the selection of peers. The results of the peer review process are reported directly to the authors and recorded by the Conference Convenor.

Papers are identified as referred or non-refereed by an against the relevant category under “Review Status” above.

The ATEA Conference Proceedings Archive listing on our website is the ultimate authority on which papers were refereed.

© Australian Teacher Education Association, July 2009. Although copyright of papers published in the annual conference proceedings is held by ATEA, authors retain the right to rework their papers for publication in other venues. Where a paper is to be reproduced in its entirety, permission should be sought from the ATEA Executive.

Crossing Borders – Teacher Education in context – putting pedagogy in its place

Julie Arnold
School of Education, Victoria University
julie.arnold@vu.edu.au

Tony Edwards
Access and Success Project, Victoria University
tony.edwards@vu.edu.au

Abstract

This paper explores ways in which Teacher Education can be implemented in higher education through a consideration of ‘site-based’ teacher education and its role in strengthening the practice-theory notion of teacher education (Strategic Education Research Program, National Research Council 1999). Many innovative educational approaches are required in higher education, and foundations for developing effective preservice teacher education have been well-informed. The question of how to optimise learning in preservice teacher education is of vital importance and is the subject of this paper.

In response to the need and desire to provide the richest learning experience possible for preservice teachers at Victoria University, the potential for a site based teaching model in teacher education is examined. While educational partnerships have been implemented by most teacher education institutions, you can imagine then the opportunities that present themselves when preservice teachers and staff are located in schools to not only take part in classroom practice, but engage with their university classes alongside school students and teachers.

This paper explores features of a ‘site-based’ generative model; it is a complex model that examines the connections between those ‘common’ learning experiences in preservice teacher education that move students toward professional practice. The model considers the key educational and professional features and expectations that prevail in teacher education, and which contribute to teacher identity. Such features include: intellectual challenges, skills development, academic rigour, reflective practice, a sense of place, authenticity and successful performance.

Central to this examination is the question of how to optimise learning in higher education where partnerships feature as an innovative platform for teaching and learning. This paper provides details of a preservice teacher program and explores the major issues, values and implementation during the unique partnership between the secondary school and the university. Such features include, student centred learning and intellectual challenges, skill development, academic rigour, reflective practice, a sense of place, authenticity and successful performance. Of vital importance in teacher education is, how, when and where such learning takes place. What are the features of the classroom, unit, staff and curriculum that shape practice? What are the expectations and assumptions about the role of learners? The implications for contemporary teaching and learning in higher education deserve detailed evaluation. The review of this partnership is underpinned by reflections and emerging common themes. Focussing on reflective stories provides a systematic platform for researching and subsequently understanding. (Carr & Kemmis 1986). The voices of the participants assist in providing a clear insight into the journey taken to enhance experiences and learning for all.

Crossing Borders – Teacher Education in Context – putting pedagogy in its place

Introduction

Many innovative educational approaches are required by preservice teachers, and the foundations for developing effective preservice teacher education have been well-informed. The re-conceptualisation of teacher education for the twenty-first century has raised many questions for academics with a primary focus being on the role of teaching, learning and research (Carpenter, Cherednichenko, Davies, & Kruger, 2000; Cochran-Smith, & Lytle, 1993; Groundwater-Smith, Ewing, & LeCornu, 2003; Kincheloe, 2003; Palmer, 1998) in teacher education. This paper is an account of an approach aimed at assisting the understanding and enhancement of preservice teachers' education, and exploration of 'next practice' in a secondary educational setting.

Context

A site-based partnership between a Melbourne secondary school and Victoria University has augmented and optimised teaching and learning opportunities for students in Melbourne's west. The project is pushing boundaries by showcasing the value of partnerships in improving professional practice and optimising student learning. This partnership has continued to raise further questions about a model and pedagogical framework to create a culture of contextualised learning and new knowledge through collaborative inquiry and action research. This draws on previous research undertaken at Victoria University (e.g. RIPE¹ research) and discusses a contextualised model and orientation for teacher education, where the preservice teacher classroom and placement are integrated within in a secondary setting.

Partnerships, to be successful and sustainable must be implemented by stakeholders who share a similar vision and philosophy. In a recent study, *Effective and Sustainable University-School Partnerships*, Kruger et al. (2009) identify partnerships as a social practice based on, trust, mutuality and reciprocity.

The connection between effective partnerships and teacher education has implications for contemporary teaching and learning in higher education which merits detailed discussion and inquiry. The model outlined in this paper describes 'site-based' teacher education and its role in strengthening the practice-theory notion of teacher education.

The Partnership Model – what it looked like

The partnership involved placing twenty-two Third Year preservice teachers in the school for two days per week throughout the course of a semester. This required that every Tuesday and Thursday an extra twenty-two people were on campus at the secondary school. The preservice teachers worked in action teams to develop their knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning and strategies for success;

¹ Researching Innovative Partnerships in Education. A Research project (2005 -2007).

pedagogy; the importance of data to inform teaching and learning; school culture and operations, student engagement and well-being; the importance of building strong community partnerships and working collaboratively with colleagues and students.

Five projects were undertaken at the college. Each project was guided by a member of staff. Teams met regularly with a staff member to review, gain assistance and feedback, and to ensure that the project was on track. The five projects are outlined below.

VCE strategies for improvement project:

Data collection and analysis pertaining to student engagement/motivation.

Development of strategies which enhance senior students' planning for success and striving for excellence during their VCE years.

Year 9 City Experience project:

Development and implementation of an intensive city-based experience to scaffold students in engaging and working in the city. Enhancing student independence and interdependent learning skills.

Junior school pedagogy project:

Exploration of effective pedagogy in Middle Years incorporating 'best practice' in the *open learning centre* and beyond. This project focussed on diverse individual needs, team teaching, student engagement, well-being and curriculum development.

Whole-school data collection and analysis:

Analysis and synthesis of data related to school effectiveness. Collection of data for analysis to facilitate effective whole-school practice aimed at enhancing student outcomes.

Year 10 Environmental and sustainability investigation:

Development and implementation of an inquiry based curriculum constructed around the enhancement of the school environment as a learning and teaching resource.

Whilst on campus at the secondary school the preservice teachers were able to access classes for observations, work with small groups of students and obtain individual interviews to gather data. Preservice teacher had the opportunity to implement workshops to assistance with their inquiries and to gain knowledge about the school, students and staff. Staff members were free to invite preservice teachers into classes to assist in conducting classes, events such as sport days and other activities. The success of the program hinged on ensuring that responsibilities were clear and adequate time was given for the projects to develop while under the guidance of the secondary college teachers.

From the outset those involved in the university and school partnership raised questions and reflected upon relevant aspects of the program for example;

- How a community of practice is established;
- What a community of practice looks like;
- How a learning community evolves successfully.

From the university perspective, the important features of the partnership with a school aimed to provide an insight into;

- How to establish and maintain a partnership;
- The logistical considerations which needed to be prioritised and addressed;
- Anticipating the learning needs of preservice teachers and school students as well as the potential impact upon the existing expectations of the teachers.

Victoria University's encouragement of authentic inquiry-based teacher learning is testament to its record of effective teacher education (Carpenter, Cherednichenko, Davies, & Kruger, 2000). Here, academics and staff recognise the central role of inquiry, and the importance of providing an authentic environment in which preservice teachers may successfully negotiate their transition into effective practice.

Cases provided a framework for reflective thinking (Kubler LaBoskey, 1994; Cherednichenko et al, 2001) and enabled rich data to be gathered concerning the events, issues, challenges and successes of the partnership. In recent years the School of Education staff at Victoria University has implemented case writing to illuminate issues, actions and interactions in teaching and learning research. Cases were utilized in this partnership as data and provided a basis for discussion, where common themes were documented and analysed for improving practice and formed the basis of evaluation of the project.

Each preservice teacher engaged in Praxis Inquiry through cases and were presented as part of a reflective portfolio. Case writing and reflective portfolios provided a systematic approach (Kubler LaBoskey, 1994) and assisted preservice teachers in navigating and orientating themselves both intellectually and pedagogically.

The question of how preservice teachers develop and engage is foregrounded in the context of this unique partnership. The preservice teachers' inquiry took on an intimate examination of the school; one that subsequently explored many of the major issues and values regarding the implementation and contextualisation of teaching and learning.

The Partnership

The partnership program provided an innovative platform for learning, and featured a 'site-based' generative model; a complex model that examines the connections between those 'common' learning experiences in preservice teacher education that move students toward professional practice. Such features include student-centred learning and intellectual challenges, skill development, academic rigour, reflective practice, a sense of place, authenticity and successful performance.

As Carr and Kemmis (1986) remind us "Praxis is always risky" (p. 190), and there is value in acknowledging that universities and schools often take risks in their innovative endeavours to facilitate experiences rich in potential knowledge for their learners. Such risks carry the possibility of great attainment as well as the challenge of venturing into uncharted waters. These ventures require trust and reasoning on the part of school leadership, particularly in a case such as this, where the boundaries between secondary and tertiary learning were to become considerably blurred as the partnership came to life.

Preservice teachers were clearly intrigued as they planned, collaborated and considered the possibilities of the new learning environment. The novelty of generating and designing curriculum was enhanced by their efforts to initiate, explore, gather data and analyse the consequences within the partnership context. Teachers expect students to be risk takers and the role of the teacher is to encourage, support and carefully monitor the risks that students take when they learn. In the context of site-based teacher education, the preservice teachers were to experience valuable sensations of self-examination generated by uncertainty (not the least of which were pedagogical in nature). Familiarity with such sensations is of much value since these are responses which they might well generate within their own students in the near future.

Universities recognise the importance of effective transition for graduate teachers and the role of a theory/practice relationship to ensure 'best practice' in teacher education. Central to this investigation is the question: What does learning look like in higher education and in contemporary secondary settings? Of vital importance, then, are the how, the when and the where such learning takes place. That is, what are the features of the classroom, unit, staff and curriculum that shape practice?

Foundations for developing effective classrooms have been well documented (Vygotsky, 1978; Wilkes, 1995; Perkins, 1995; Gardner, 1983; Dewey, 1963) and effective preservice teacher education has equally been well informed (Shulman, 1987; Loughran, 2006; Cochran-Smith, 1999; Palmer 1998; Parsons & Brown, 2002; Kruger, et al. 2009; Cochran-Smith, & Lytle, 1999). The partnership project provides revealing insights into the research process involved in developing professional teachers and learners. Importantly, it evidences the close links partnerships hold with effective teacher education and the development of professional practitioners. The projects undertaken within the partnership are examined, and by understanding the interrelation of conceptualisation with realised operations, it becomes possible to generalise about the layers, structures and systems at work in the 'montage' of experiences involved in learning (Wilks, 2004).

Methodology

By blending theory and practice in the partnerships project a professional picture can develop that has the ability to guide educators in further learning and professional development. This connection was supported by qualitative research that was developed through Collaborative Practitioner Research methodology (Cherednichenko, Davies, Kruger, & O'Rourke 2001). Data collection was facilitated by enabling preservice teachers as well as university colleagues to contribute to the research through case writing. Observations, interviews and events acted as a catalyst for identifying incidents and provided opportunities for case writing. The process of analysis was implemented through CPR methodology and was an opportunity for participants to share in analysis and synthesis in the formation of research findings. Such a strategic plan and methodology optimised the deeper learning process (NRC, 1999). Analysis of the data from the projects and cases, presented by the preservice teachers, resulted in the generation of a number of questions and discussion points for the university colleagues. For example:

- Recognition of the emergence of common themes;

- What are the preservice teachers' assumptions regarding the partnership?
- Which elements of the partnership are shaping practice?
- What new questions are the preservice teachers asking?

The praxis inquiry explored complex pedagogical experiences for both the university colleagues and the preservice teachers. The platform for participants to engage in meaningful reflection and inquiry concerning authentic practice provided a new, rich space for pedagogical focus. Praxis inquiry undertaken by university colleagues has led to deeper thinking and evaluation the partnership in terms of :

- informing the search for quality and relevance in higher education curriculum and pedagogical reform for preservice teachers;
- developing a framework to describe optimal circumstances leading to the self-efficacy of 'holistic' preservice teachers;
- documenting the nature of the mind-shift in the developing preservice teacher journey;
- providing a platform to voice the discourse, recurring themes and a paradigm of mutual or common understanding; and,
- making the learning visible in the partnership process for preservice teachers while simultaneously endeavouring to identify what was not visible in the learning process.

Establishing the conditions for beneficial school/university partnerships

Schools continue to operate in complex environments and circumstances and as a result it is understandable that many school leaders are reticent to risk altering the existing dimensions of their daily operations, even with the promise of their enhancement as an outcome result. The placement of preservice teachers often consists primarily of the logistical challenge of placing a growing number of preservice teachers into a finite number of schools. The development of a partnership, however, requires both philosophical and pragmatic bridges to be constructed between school and university participants.

Having some insight into the successes and challenges facing a particular school helps to contextualise the possibilities for a partnership, in light of the strategic priorities of that school's leadership. Getting a foot in the door of the school is often best achieved through the 'visitor' having an appreciation of the 'lay of the land' even before making that first phone call.

VicHealth's (2004) Partnerships Analysis Tool identifies aspects for reflection upon the elements essential for the construction of partnerships, including the following:

- the perceived need for the partnership based on areas of common interest and complementary capacity;
- the establishment of clear goals for the partnership, with accompanying commitment to such goals;
- the perceived benefits of the partnership outweighing the costs;
- partners sharing common ideologies, interests and approaches;
- consideration that their respective core businesses are at least partially interdependent;

- the combined skills, knowledge and experience of the membership within the partnership permitting comprehensive understandings and responses to issues being addressed;
- the roles, responsibilities and expectations of partners being clearly defined and understood by all parties;
- that there is an investment in the partnership of time, personnel, materials or facilities;
- the action is value adding to the members constituting the partnership;
- that there are processes for recognising and celebrating collective achievements as well as individual contributions;
- demonstration or documentation of the outcomes of collective work;
- reflection upon progress reinforcing the need to continue the collaboration;
- that there are resources available from either internal or external sources to continue the partnership.

These considerations are just part of an extensive list that is added to as the collaborative partnership experience continues and is reflected upon. Such aspects are salient for preparation in even the earliest stages of a relationship between school and university (Williams, Davies & Edwards, 2008). By explicitly addressing such matters pertaining to scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978), the potential partnership can begin construction on 'solid ground'.

The shared insights gained through detailed examination of the relationship between the school and the university, lead to the conclusion that such a partnership which encourages on site teacher education would be of exceptional benefit, especially in terms of student learning outcomes. This experience has demonstrated that when collaborative partnerships between school and universities are respectfully negotiated, implemented and sustained by all stakeholders, the relationship can offer rich learning and teaching experiences for preservice teachers. This confirms the conclusion reached by Kruger et al. (2009):

When preservice teachers are liberated, at least partially, from the constraints of the unquestioned assumptions about their involvement in school settings, they become active in the formation and outcomes of partnership practices in ways which serve their developing professional interests. Authentic practice develops in the preservice teacher the personal responsibility the teacher has for the school student and the understanding and practical accomplishments which support students' feelings. (p. 82).

Reflections on the partnership by the researcher

It became clear that the classroom space provided by the school enabled an effective transition to reflection as a social and professional practice; it became a place of conversation and the recording of practice. A new stage was entered which saw an unprecedented, energetic emergence of cultural practice where preservice teachers provided description of experiences, and at the same time began to offer hypotheses about what they had observed. They began to guide each other and seek meaning through expanded conversations and elaborate scrutiny of situations and events. A framework was developed in response to preservice teachers' experiences and needs, to assist them in collecting and documenting data. A simplified version of the Praxis Inquiry protocol was utilised to shape their research, guided by a three-step process.

Table 1: Three-step process of Praxis Inquiry

Focussed observations	Writing observations	Reflecting
Looking at specific features such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom environment • Student diversity • Responding to students • Engaging students 	Documenting through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case writing • Journal • Portfolios • Minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explaining and exploring • What do others think? • Can they add to our understanding?

Learning through stories

The technique of case writing was introduced to the preservice teachers in the form of what were termed ‘stories’. Included below are segments of such stories by preservice teachers that provided an effective method for the beginning of conversations and analysis concerning their teaching and learning.

Sam, a Year 3 preservice teacher:

I am learning that I have lots to learn. I am seeing the positive side of teaching. The Mentor teachers are happy and the students are happy. It appears to me that members of the teaching staff are keen for us to become good teachers. I was eager to show my skills to my Mentor teacher. I felt comfortable within the first lesson and I was acutely aware of the pace and interactions unfolded. I paid careful attention to the sessions and how they were framed. I was still always asking myself, “Are you still sure you want to be a teacher”? The answer was still “Yes”. Introductions to most new environments can be confusing.

Anne, a Year 3 preservice teacher:

My introduction and initial experience was a week of anxiety and laughter. The school provided us with literature and information to acquaint ourselves with. This was helpful but also concerning as there was much data to take in, but I still have little sense of what is expected. The staff are warm and supportive and the students seem to be thriving in a community in which they feel safe and supported.

Lisa, a Year 3 preservice teacher:

Go for it and don’t hold back – if we want to try something – just do it. There is no point in not becoming fully involved in researching and embracing my school experience. I will attempt to put in and sustain a great effort within the classroom. My mentor has been extremely accommodating and encouraging of me and other fellow preservice teachers. This has ensured that we feel comfortable and are active participants in the classroom.

Focussing on stories provides a systematic platform for researching and subsequently understanding an educational problem. Preservice teachers were analysing their own and their colleague’s stories. New information and communication techniques were being developed and consequently a more sophisticated language began to be articulated so as to interpret the information. The hermeneutic activity became more rigorous. As Kincheloe (2003) states, “teacher researchers are better prepared to

become higher-order thinkers who tie classroom activities to profound pedagogical, social, historical and philosophical purposes” (p. 183). Praxis Inquiry seems essential to the construction of new knowledge, and was particularly well-suited to the program based at this secondary school. The preservice teachers were not only inspired by the stories, but they felt empowered to articulate them in a way that enhanced the epistemological dialogue.

Sarah, a Year 3 preservice teacher:

As a prospective teacher, I embrace my own reflective development and am committed to progressively developing my voice beyond preservice teacher education in order to improve myself as a teacher, and in turn improve the learning opportunities for my students. As I direct my own self inquiry, I hope to be able to confront and question personal beliefs values, actions and life experiences that shape who I am in order to realise their effect on my role as a teacher. In doing so, it is equally important that I encourage freedom of thought, speech, action and learning among my students to promote the development of their individual voices.

This depth of analysis became a feature of the conversations. Critical analysis and hermeneutic interpretation gained momentum and became an important feature of the classroom sessions and enhanced higher levels of thinking. Using research-based, theoretically informed reflection, teachers as researchers can come to see dimensions of schooling that had been previously unfathomable, and can engage in actions that raise the conceptual and ethical quality of their professional practice and open up a new world of education (Kincheloe, 2003).

The university colleagues implemented the use of case writing to encourage discourse among the students. Teachers and preservice teachers all wrote and shared their thoughts. Carr and Kemmis (1986) have a useful perspective on teacher professional competence. They argue that teachers’ knowledge is embedded in historical and social patterns that are determined by previous experiences and that these elements are diverse depending on the school context and culture. For them, teacher professionalism and competency can be viewed in five distinct ways:

1. The commonsense view
2. The philosophical view
3. The applied science view
4. The practical approach
5. The critical view

However, and more importantly, the views concerning teachers’ knowledge emphasises the value of critical thinking for teachers and preservice teachers, particularly their individual ability to abstract and interpret practice and knowledge through critical thought. Case writing and subsequent reflective discussion provides the opportunity for critical thought processes and the pedagogical features of case writing present valuable learning and analysis (Carr & Kemmis 1996).

The ‘site-based’ partnership approach provided excellent opportunities for understanding preservice teacher learning. Case writing provided the evidence to support this process by paving the way for preservice teachers to identify their own professional learning needs; it assisted them in facing the challenges of this new situation and in planning effective responses to pedagogical processes and

requirement. The preservice teachers were encouraged to consider pedagogical perspectives in their case writing, and did so. Suggested issues for reflection included:

- organising/administration;
- flexibility and problem solving;
- classroom management;
- flexible setting;
- resources.

Challenges

The ‘site-based’ context of the secondary school partnership of this study provided the opportunity for preservice teachers to be challenged to:

- know and understand the students in the diverse school community;
- adopt and integrate an environment that reflects the twenty-first century;
- take considered and well monitored risks when learning;
- determine issues related to the engagement of young people; and
- make observations about, and understand further, the democratic forces that form in the emerging change in the school community.

This partnership experience is testament to the philosophical and logistical commitment of Victoria University’s School of Education to conduct Applied Curriculum Projects as an authentic and potentially rich teacher education experience. Gaining authentic teacher inquiry through reflective practice has been evidenced and strengthened by the action research. Cherednichenko and Kruger (2004) hold that the starting point for teacher education should focus preservice teacher inquiry on an authentic interest in working with school students so as to enhance teacher education. By the nature of the action research process and the reflective practice, the secondary school involved in this partnership has strengthened its own notion of the value of a practice-theory approach to teacher education.

One of the key features leading to the success of the project was the approach adopted within the partnership to open and full communication. Such an approach to communication is essential on a number of fronts, namely:

- The continuous opportunity provided for pedagogical dialogue, conversations and self-talk encourage debate and act as a platform to scaffold higher levels of thinking in preservice teachers.
- It restores a social competency to the environment where confusion can often reign for the teacher and learner.
- Communication allows teachers to know students and also provides opportunity for teachers to know preservice teachers.
- And finally, many levels of communication requires listening and gives permission to acquire meaning and satisfaction in decision making, questioning, laughing and endless learning with others.

Collecting data and analysing evidence to improve practice

Preservice teachers developed action plans for research which outlined the rationale, background, and action plan for collecting and analysing data. An example offered below is a summary statement from the larger, detailed project plan and shows the

links made between preservice teachers' ideas gleaned from collaborating with school staff, and their deepening involvement and pedagogical understanding.

Action Plan example:

- interview students (quantitative and qualitative data);
- write cases (qualitative data);
- provide reflection, recommendations and presentations on the project outcomes;
- discuss with staff the results / trends from previous VCE results;
- conduct a series of workshops based upon student responses to interviews.

The preservice teachers gained additional professional development insights throughout the various projects. Planning for such insights became embedded in their work. A project that aimed to build upon learning and knowledge of sustainable practices for the school was supported by introducing professional development for students, preservice teachers, staff and community through a number of actions as outlined below. The group planned to support the partnership's endeavours through activities such as

- the establishment of networks and links with sustainability educational groups and agencies such as 'Iramoo'²;
- assistance and recommendations from local Council, Trade, staff, and professional advisors.

When conducting the project it was essential that preservice teachers recognised and encouraged the values of the host school, and that they embodied these values at all times and during all interactions throughout their involvement with the project. In particular, preservice teachers aimed to: promote high achievement and acknowledge student success whilst catering for the full range of student talents and differences; improve student learning outcomes – specifically, examination performance; enhance student learning culture and encourage the college values of growing pride and achievement; value staff and build capacity; and increase positive parental input.

Strong preservice teacher involvement was a critical aspect of this project and aimed to be fluid, innovative and flexible – it was essential that any data collection and analysis took into account the ideas, priorities, time frame, issues and philosophical framework of the partnership. The documentation provided was issued to the group and staff for comment and a final plan distributed. Work could only confidently begin when all stakeholders were informed and had opportunity to shape the work of the preservice teachers' proposal.

A professional collaboration

The role of communication was particularly important at all stages of the partnership. Preliminary notes and data were revisited to analyse the directions and important issues that had been undertaken during the course of the partnership. These reviews were often done with the mentor teacher or peers. The conversations continued when participants met at the University. The results of these communications conveyed to

² 'Iramoo' is an environmental educational program closely linked with Victoria University.

the researcher that preservice teachers had incorporated an understanding of pedagogical terms and were utilising their developing knowledge in the conversations. They used professional language to demonstrate a high level of thinking and to explain to some degree their emerging beliefs as preservice teachers. It was therefore possible for project participants to build upon these discussions and converse in relevant terms about shared experiences in their field of educational research. In these instances, the communication within the group was crucial in identifying themes for analysis and refining (synthesis) ideas and being explicit about the metacognitive processes at work.

The secondary school experience manifested a powerful opportunity to collect and engage in gathering data for preservice teacher research from a particularly unique number of perspectives. The risks of implementing the project required much information in order to optimise the successful outcomes of the school/university partnership. Some questions that shaped the early ideas and discussion included:

- stakeholders' assumptions;
- knowing the features of the classroom, unit, staff and curriculum that shape practice;
- recognising common themes, problems and achievements emerging;
- geographical location;
- teaching and learning approaches;
- personality issues;
- sharing information.

A partnership must offer beneficial outcomes, as perceived by the various members of the project. This is fundamental to the partnership's development and subsequent success. The preservice teachers gained professional development insights throughout the various projects. Planning for such insights became embedded in their work. A project that aimed to build upon learning and knowledge of sustainable practices for the school was supported by introducing professional development for students, preservice teachers, staff and community through a number of actions as outlined below. The group planned to support the partnership's endeavours through activities such as

- the establishment of networks and links with sustainability educational groups and agencies such as 'Iramoo'
- assistance and recommendations from local Council, Trade, staff, and professional advisors.

School organisations have clear expectations and routines for optimising the educational opportunities of their students, and these are explicitly communicated in respective school documentation. Making these expectations clear to preservice teachers is critical. When preservice students were asked to provide their expectations of the school and to recount the experience from their own perspective, they commented on the necessity for the partnership to provide for observations of, and participation in:

- well-planned classroom teaching and learning;
- opportunities to socialise and chat with staff, e.g., morning teas;
- being creative and maintaining a flexible approach so as to be able to capitalise on what the new situation might offer;

- clear essential teaching requirements;
- familiarisation with documentation;
- clear communication protocols, such as Project Partnership report forms;
- professional engagement and practice such as, punctuality;
- the effective organisation and management of administrative duties by both the preservice teachers and the university colleagues;
- the opportunity to develop the ability to ‘think on your feet’.
- the making of learning connections in a new situation.
- staffroom and yard duty responsibilities
- the preservice teachers to be autonomous and able to identify their own professional learning needs.

Reflective practice: a conclusion

The educator’s role implies a capacity to adapt to varied teaching capacities and circumstances. Researching and reflecting on educational practice in partnerships has become an increasingly important and effective way for the preservice teacher to consider their responsibility as a ‘teacher as learner’ and ‘teacher as researcher’. Reflecting upon teaching and learning with students, teachers, preservice teachers and institutional partners is vital to professional learning teams in partnerships. Consideration of individual and institutional flexibility is of vital importance to the educational partnership process. Preservice teachers must be open to examining their own teaching assumptions and practices as well as to the fairness of institutional arrangements (Price & Valli, 2005).

While there are many approaches to research in education, the effective inclusion praxis inquiry provides a model for education partnerships. Partnership can augment and optimise education opportunities by crossing the boundaries and showcasing the value of collaboration for the improvement of professional practice and optimisation of preservice teacher, staff and student learning. Partnerships will continue to raise further questions about the contextualised model and resultant pedagogical framework required to create a culture of continued learning and knowledge through collaborative research.

References

- Carpenter, C., Cherednichenko, B., Davies, A. & Kruger, T. (2000). Liaising dangerously? A decade of practice-based learning in teacher education. Keynote Paper presented at the Rethinking Teacher Education Conference, Melbourne, 11-12 Oct.
- Carr, W. & Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming Critical: Education, knowledge and research*. Revised ed. Melbourne, Victoria: Deakin University.
- Cherednichenko, B., Davies, A., Kruger, T., & O’Rourke, M. (2001). Collaborative practices: from description to theory. Paper presented to the Australian Association for Research in Education. School of Education, Victoria University. Fremantle, Western Australia, 2-6 December, 2001.
- Cherednichenko, B., Hooley, N., Kruger, T., & Moore, R., (2002). Longitudinal study of school restructuring. Paper presented to the Australian Association for Research in Education, Fremantle, Western Australia, December, 2001.

- Clandinin D. & Connelly F. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*, California, USA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cochran-Smith, M & Lytle, S. (1999). *Relationships of knowledge and practice: Teacher learning in communities*. In Iran-Nejad & P. Pearson (eds.). *Review of Research in Education* (1999), Vol. 24, pp. 249-305.
- Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S. (1993). *Insider/outsider teacher research and knowledge*. New York: Columbia University Teachers College Press.
- DET (Department of Education and Training) (2004). *Research on human learning.*, 2004: Department of Education and Training. Victoria.
- Dewey, J. (1963). *Experience & Education*. The Kappa Delta Pi Lecture Series New York, USA: Collier Books.
- Fullen, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. California, USA: Jossey-Bass.
- Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple intelligences: The theory in practice*. New York: Basic Books.
- Giddens, A. (1999). *Runaway world: How globalisation is reshaping our lives*. London: Profile Books.
- Groundwater-Smith, S., Ewing, R., & LeCornu, R. (2003). *Teaching: Challenges and dilemmas*, 2nd Ed. Melbourne: Nelson Australia P/L.
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2003). *Teachers as researchers: Qualitative inquiry as a pathway to empowerment*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Kruger, T., Cherednichenko, B., Davies, A., Eckersley, B., & Newell, F. (2009). *Effective and sustainable university - School partnerships: Beyond determined efforts by inspired individuals*. Canberra. Australia: Teaching Australia.
- Kruger, T., Cherednichenko, B., Jones, D., & Moore, R. (2002). *The principles and practices of effective induction of beginning teachers*. Victoria Institute of Teaching, Victoria.
- Kubler LaBoskey, V. (1994) *Development of Reflective Practice: a study of preservice teachers*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Loughran, J. (2006). *Developing a pedagogy of teacher education*. New York: Routledge.
- NRC (National Research Council) (1999). *Improving student learning: A strategic plan for education research and its utilization*. Committee on a Feasibility Study for A Strategic Education Research Program. Washington DC: National Academy Press.
- Perkins, D. (1995). *Outsmarting IQ: The emerging science of learnable intelligence*. New York: Free Press.
- Palmer, P. (1998), *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Parson, R. D. & Brown, K. S. (2002), *Teacher as reflective practitioner and action researcher*, Wadsworth Thomas Learning, Belmont, CA, USA.
- Pollard, A. (2002). *Reflective teaching: effective and evidence-informed professional practice*. London, UK: Continuum.
- Price J., & Valli, L. (2005.) *Preservice teachers becoming agents of change: Pedagogical implications for action research*. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 56(1) pp. 57-72. Retrieved 28 April, 2009, from <http://jte.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/56/1/57>
- Ragin, C. & Becker, H. (Eds.). (1992). *What is a case? Exploring the foundations of social inquiry*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Press.
- Shulman, L. (1987). *Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform*. *Harvard Educational review*, 51, 1-22.

- Shulman, L. (1999). Taking teaching seriously. *Change*, 31(4), 10-17.
- VicHealth (2004). *The partnerships analysis tool for partners in health promotion*. Victorian Government VicHealth Resource Centre. Retrieved 28 April, 2009 from <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/en/Resource-Centre/Publications-and-Resources/Mental-health-and-wellbeing/Mental-health-promotion/Partnerships-Analysis-Tool.aspx>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wilks, (Ed.). (2004). *Designing a thinking curriculum: Encouraging higher order thinking in middle years*. Melbourne Australia: Australian Academy of the Arts.
- Williams, J., Davies, M., & Edwards, T. (2008). Towards a scholarship of engagement: mapping the authentic partnership. HERDSA Conference, New Zealand.