



Successful university-school partnerships: An interpretive framework to inform partnership practice



Mellita Jones ^{a,*}, Linda Hobbs ^b, John Kenny ^c, Coral Campbell ^b, Gail Chittleborough ^b, Andrew Gilbert ^d, Sandra Herbert ^b, Christine Redman ^e

^a Australian Catholic University, Australia

^b Deakin University, Australia

^c University of Tasmania, Australia

^d George Mason University, USA

^e University of Melbourne, Australia

HIGHLIGHTS

- Four-part Interpretive Framework to guide university-school partnership activity.
- Growing University-School Partnerships: Guide to initiate, implement and evaluate partnership activity.
- Representations of Partnership: Connective, Generative and Transformative typology.
- Partnership typology represents levels of embeddedness rather than a hierarchy.
- Growth Model: Enablers, locus and evidence of pre-service teacher's growth.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 11 December 2015

Received in revised form

30 July 2016

Accepted 2 August 2016

Available online 24 August 2016

Keywords:

Partnerships

Science education

School-based

Teacher education

Interpretive framework

University-school partnership

ABSTRACT

This paper presents an Interpretive Framework stemming from a longitudinal and iterative multiple case study of five Australian universities examining the cogent and unique practices underpinning their established and successful school-based science teacher education programs. Results from interviews with teacher educators, school staff and pre-service teachers, show four components that guide the successful and sustainable use of university-school partnerships. These components: Guiding Pedagogical Principles; Growing University-School Partnerships; Representations of Partnership; and Growth Model provide a scaffold for initiating, growing and sustaining partnerships that maximise the benefits for all. The essential role of both university and school staff is also highlighted.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

In a climate of mounting criticism about the quality and effectiveness of teacher education, never has the notion of university-

school partnerships been so important. “Partnerships” is the “buzz word” within contemporary education discourses, and have been an important element of teacher education, mainly through the practicum, since the inception of initial teacher preparation programs. The long-established practicum, usually a block period of time, is where pre-service teachers (PSTs) gain practical experience teaching in schools. It is in these settings that PSTs attempt to make sense of various theoretical ideas covered in university course work through trialling, reflecting and amending; where they strengthen their understanding of children and their learning needs; develop insights into how schools are structured and how they operate; and begin to establish their emerging identity as teachers. It is

Abbreviations: IF, Interpretive Framework; STEPS, Science Teacher Education Partnerships with Schools; PSTs, Pre-service teachers; GPP, Guiding Pedagogical Principles; GUSP, Growing University-School Partnerships; RPP, Representations of Partnership Practice.

* Corresponding author. Australian Catholic University, PO Box 650, Ballarat, VIC 3353, Australia.

E-mail address: Mellita.jones@acu.edu.au (M. Jones).

universally considered to be one of the most essential components of any teacher preparation program.

In recent years, the teacher education practicum has been under increasing scrutiny. Criticisms exist tied to how well the theory-practice nexus is accomplished through these placements and how well PSTs are supported in these periods of relative isolation from the university and their lecturers, especially when placed in regional and rural locations (e.g. [Gorodetsky & Barak, 2008](#); [Korthagen, 2001](#); [Zeichner, 2010](#)). As a consequence, universities are being challenged to re-think the ways in which they interact with schools in teacher education programs to optimise the rich learning experience they can provide. Indeed, in some arenas, there has been a question as to whether the university has a useful place in teacher education at all (e.g. see [Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012](#); [Grossman & Loeb, 2008](#)).

Some key initiatives that have attempted to address these concerns in teacher education include system wide approaches like the United States' Professional Development Schools ([Darling-Hammond, 2012](#)), Scotland's Education and University Initial Teacher Education Partnerships ([Donaldson, 2011](#)); and the School Direct programme of England and Wales ([Gu et al., 2016](#)). More individual type partnership programs have also been reported in the literature. These partnership programs range from a collaborative co-teaching type of arrangement (e.g. [Author, 2010](#); [Kenny, 2012](#); [Murphy, Bianchi, McCullagh, & Kerr, 2013](#)) to teacher as mentor-student as novice arrangements (e.g. [Palmer, 2006](#)). A suite of these individual partnership arrangements has also been recently reported where elements of rural and regional; online; indigenous and 'clinical' type models have been profiled (see [Author, 2014](#)).

Whether individually or more systemically initiated and implemented, each of these university-school partnership programs, whilst varied in specific operational detail, share the common element of teacher education taking on increased school-based approaches. Reports of these programs have highlighted the delicate balance that can be difficult to achieve between the overly theoretical approaches that tend to stem from university-based teacher education (e.g. [Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009](#); [Korthagen, 2001](#); [Zeichner, 2010](#)), and the lack of theory-informed practice stemming from a professional or apprentice-based approach that is associated with excessive school-based models (see for example, [Allen & Wright, 2014](#); [Author, 2014](#); [Cheng, Cheng, & Tang, 2010](#); [Hobson, Smith, & Brown, 2012](#)). Collectively, these report findings suggest that a much more collaborative and balanced approach to theory and practice needs to be achieved, and that indeed, the university and the school both have an important role in initial teacher education.

A further initiative, and one that is the focus of the study reported in this paper, is the establishment of university-school partnerships that sit outside of the practicum. These types of partnerships are particularly beneficial for curriculum areas that traditionally receive limited teaching time, like primary school science. Primary PSTs have limited opportunity to experience science during practicum, escalating the need for science teacher education to establish reciprocal relationships with schools in an effort to improve science teaching ([Peterson & Treagust, 2014](#)). This paper provides a synthesis of a two-year study involving five Australian universities exploring such partnerships.

The five universities involved in the Science Teacher Education Partnerships with Schools (STEPS) study had a school-based science component specific to their primary science education coursework. The schools involved were not necessarily professional development schools, and prior to involvement in the science partnerships, most had no formal or informal relationships with the universities. The success of these programs, coupled with the

relative silence in the literature of these how partnerships work when they are embedded in discipline-based course-work, creates a need to examine what made these partnerships so successful in the absence of formal partnership arrangements.

The aim of the STEPS project was to provide a meta-analysis of the methodologies, informing theories, and principles associated with these established and successful partnerships in order to develop an Interpretive Framework (IF) for the initiation, implementation and evaluation of university-school partnerships. In general, an interpretive framework provides a structure for examining, conceptualizing, understanding and implementing practice, and helps to identify the potential benefits and impacts of partnership activity. In this paper we describe the various components of the STEPS IF by drawing on data to show the grounded nature of the IF development, and to illustrate how it can be applied to a range of partnership types. The IF is informed by the cross-case analysis of the five programs, interview data from the broader teacher education community, and extant literature in the field. We present the four emergent components of the IF: 1) The Guiding Pedagogical Principals; 2) A guide to Growing University-School Partnerships; 3) Representations of Partnership Practice; and 4) A Growth Model for using partnerships in teacher education. We begin with the background to the research where we situate our practice in the current climate of teacher education and partnership theory and follow with a description of the methodology used to analyse our practice. Results are presented as the four components of the IF. The purpose of this analysis is to provide a research-informed structure and language for the use of teacher educators and others interested in working in the university-school partnership space.

2. Background

2.1. The current climate of teacher education

There have been concerns about the quality of teacher education both nationally and internationally for a number of years. These concerns are represented through the many inquiries that persistently question the quality and effectiveness of initial teacher education programs. For example, there is the "101 damnations" of initial teacher education in Australia ([Louden, 2008](#)); "teacher bashing" in the United States ([Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012](#)); and a "war on teachers" in England ([MacBeath, 2012](#)). These and other admonishments of teacher quality around the world have been inherently linked to the effectiveness of initial teacher preparation programs.

Criticisms about initial teacher education claim that it is overly theoretical and limited in its effectiveness to prepare PSTs to implement theory-informed practice in the "real world" of the classroom. Recently in Australia, the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group ([TEMAG, 2014](#)) identified the integration of theory and practice as one of its most important recommendations in reforming teacher education. This call for theory-practice nexus has been raised as a key determinant for successful teacher education internationally for a number of years (e.g. [Darling-Hammond, 2000](#); [Korthagen, 2001](#); [Zeichner, 2010](#)) and the challenge to address the apparent disconnect is consistently being encouraged through the use of strong university-school partnerships ([Barber & Mourshed, 2007](#); [Darling-Hammond, 2012](#)).

2.2. University-school partnerships

Most commentary concerning teacher education highlights the need for PSTs to engage with the teaching profession in authentic ways. For example, the Australian Council of Deans of Education

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6850333>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6850333>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)