



Joint observation of student teaching and related tripartite dialogue during field experience: Partner perspectives



Peter Mtika*, Dean Robson, Roseanne Fitzpatrick

School of Education, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen AB24 5UA, United Kingdom

HIGHLIGHTS

- Joint observation is an under-explored element of school-university partnership.
- Joint observation contributed to situated supportive dialogue.
- Joint observation helped consolidate school-university partnership.
- Joint observation entails further cultural shift in university-school partnership.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 9 February 2013

Received in revised form

16 December 2013

Accepted 23 December 2013

Keywords:

Joint observation

Collaborative partnership

Field experience

Teacher education

ABSTRACT

This article explores joint observation implemented as part of a partnership between schools and a teacher education institution during field experience (practicum) from the perspectives of student teachers, supporter (cooperating) teachers and tutors (university teacher educators). Joint observation comprising the viewing of student teacher practice in the classroom context by supporter teacher and tutor, and related tripartite dialogue, were implemented with a view to strengthening such collaborative partnership. In this exploratory study, qualitative and quantitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Findings identified the benefits and challenges of joint observation. Implications of the study are discussed.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Internationally, it has been argued that quality teacher preparation is underpinned by strong partnership activity involving schools and universities delivering initial teacher education (ITE) (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Lynch & Smith, 2012; Sivan & Chan, 2009; Smith, Brisard, & Menter, 2006; Spendlove, Howes, & Wake, 2010; Zeichner, 2010). However, researchers in different parts of the world have consistently highlighted problems with building successful, authentic partnerships between school and teacher education institutions (e.g., Bullough, Draper, Smith, & Birrell, 2004; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Cope & Stephen, 2001; Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting, & Whitty, 2000; Jeffery & Tobias, 2009; Mtika, 2008; Smith et al., 2006; Zeichner, 2010).

The literature has reported that there is often a disconnect between university and schools during teacher preparation (Anagnostopoulos, Smith, & Basmadjian, 2007; Cope & Stephen,

2001; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; Zeichner, 2010). This disconnect has been partly linked to the location of teacher education in the dissimilar settings of schools and university (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985). Commenting on the dual setting in which teacher education takes place in many programmes in the United States of America, Cuenca, Schmeichel, Butler, Dinkleman & Nichols Jnr (2011) echoed the view of Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) that the existence of distinct knowledge layers in these two settings can be detrimental to the school-based element of teacher education. In relation to partnerships in England, Spendlove et al. (2010) explained that “[...] a polarised view exists where school experience focuses [teacher] trainees very much on day-to-day pragmatics of working in school classrooms while staff in [higher education institutions] HEIs attempt to provide the theoretical basis to underpin and interpret these school-based activities” (p. 67).

Similarly, studies in Australia and Scotland, amongst others, have found that navigating these school-university terrains can create tensions for student teachers in particular (Lynch & Smith, 2012; Smith, 2010), such as anxiety over the summative assessment role of tutor supervision (MacDougall, Mtika, Reid, & Weir, 2013),

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44 (0) 1224274659.

E-mail address: p.mtika@abdn.ac.uk (P. Mtika).

and a student teacher's development of a sense of belonging while on school placement (Johnston, 2010). Commenting on partnerships in Australia, Lynch and Smith (2012) noted: "Despite interest and progress, conceptual and practical difficulties remain in establishing, developing, nurturing and implementing successful partnerships so that core interests of partners are satisfied" (p. 132). These sentiments have a wider applicability, such as in Scotland where a recent review of teacher education has made recommendations for enhanced partnership between teacher education institutions, schools and local educational authorities (Donaldson, 2011).

The purpose of this paper is to point to the potential benefits of joint observation and related tripartite dialogue (hereinafter, JOTD), and to initiate further research and deeper conceptualisation of JOTD as a key element in developing collaborative partnerships and horizontal expertise in and for teacher education. The paper specifically examines the perceptions and experiences of student teachers, supporter teachers and tutors of JOTD of classroom-based student teaching during field experience with a view to enhancing collaborative partnership activities between schools and universities to the benefit of all partners in a Scottish university-based teacher education programme. This exploratory study has the potential to provide initial empirical support for the further development of JOTD.

1.1. Collaborative partnership in teacher education

The call for enhanced partnership is based on the belief that learning to teach should be a joint venture between schools and universities, and that student teachers require appropriate academic, practical and personal support in order to smoothly navigate the different settings for teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985). In particular, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) suggested that partnership underpinned by 'knowledge of practice' can better define any meaningful collaboration between schools and universities.

The international literature suggests that partnership is conceptualised in different ways, and that a number of partnership models have been explored, in different countries (Furlong et al., 2000; Lynch & Smith, 2012; Moran, Abbott, & Clarke, 2009; Smith et al., 2006). These models can be generally characterised as *cooperative* or *collaborative* in nature with a 'true' collaborative model being proposed as the more desirable enabling all partners (organisation and personnel) to have an equal stake in the development of teacher education (Smith, 2010; Smith et al., 2006; Zeichner, 2010). In Scotland, a hierarchical model has traditionally dominated where the nature of field experience is controlled by the university. This study investigates the application of a more collaborative approach to partnership where the aim is to ensure that all partners have a more equal stake.

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to present a critical review of various partnership models, forms of collaborative partnership are discussed and problematised. Forms of collaborative partnership can be characterised by the personnel involved and/or the sites of partnership. For example, Professional Development Schools (PDS) have gained currency in the United States, assuming the role of 'clinical' sites for teacher preparation which aim "to maximise student learning, to support professional teaching practice, to enhance the professional education of novice and veteran teachers, and to encourage research and inquiry related to educational practice" (Sandholtz & Dadlez, 2000, p. 7). However, most of the activities (such as guided field observations and staged entry into teaching responsibilities) characterising this model are said to be voluntary (Sandholtz & Dadlez, 2000). PDSs also raise the issue of equity since only a few selected schools are usually involved. It

may further be argued that the 'closed' nature of the PDS may result in the development of student teachers based on experiences and conditions in specific school settings, leading to difficulties when they qualify and move to teach in new schools which have characteristics not aligning with the PDS setting.

Cope and Stephen (2001) proposed a model in which "school teachers, known as teacher fellows, [are] actively involved in the delivery of teacher education within the university" (p. 914). The assumption aligning with this arrangement was that teachers would be able to bring craft knowledge to university-based teacher education for the benefit of student teachers (Cope & Stephen, 2001). Specifically, "school teachers are considered to be a source of implicit, contextualised, expert, professional knowledge for preservice teachers" (Chalies, Ria, Bertone, Trohel, & Durand, 2004, p. 766). However, within this arrangement, universities retain control over the definition and delivery of knowledge and skills deemed desirable in new teacher development (Barab & Duffy, 2000). Also, most of the activities appeared to take place within the university, and activities at classroom level involving a network of student teachers, supporter teachers and tutors were rarely discussed. These aspects may mean that the extent of true collaborative partnership may be hindered in such situations.

Anagnostopoulos et al. (2007) and Zeichner (2010) proposed that supporter teachers and tutors need to enact changes in their professional boundaries in reconstructing knowledge underpinning teacher education. The benefit of this co-constructed perspective is that it may "facilitate cross-institutional communication and collaboration" (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2007, p. 140). Authors suggest that for 'horizontal expertise' (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2007) and 'hybrid spaces' (Zeichner, 2010) to develop, an informed network between university educators and teachers in whose classes student teachers spend most of their time for field experience is required (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2007). This mutual professional network may then be better placed to deal with any tensions which can arise to affect student teaching due to the distinctive settings in which teacher education takes place. Unlike the scheme discussed above, network meetings took place away from both university and schools thereby offering a neutral space to participants in which to explore student teacher professional learning (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2007). However, similarly, the network activities do not appear to have a clear focus within the classrooms hosting student teaching.

Zeichner (2010) suggested the use of hybridity theory to link teachers and teacher educators, calling for the development of shared relationships, valuing school and university knowledge and realigning teachers and teacher educators in "a more synergistic way" (Zeichner, 2010, p. 93). A teachers-in-residency scheme was proposed as one way of ensuring that school knowledge is embedded within university courses. Comparable with the teacher fellow scheme (Cope & Stephen, 2001), such schemes occur largely in university space and may therefore be viewed as giving undue prominence to the role of university knowledge, which may bring into question the true collaborative nature of the partnership.

Based on this discussion, it is appropriate to suggest that effective collaborative partnership approaches value joint sharing of understanding between teacher educators and teachers in schools. It is suggested that bringing teachers and teacher educators more closely together in non-hierarchical *authentic* partnership has the potential to narrow the perceived disconnect between school and university, whilst directly supporting student teaching (Zeichner, 2010). However, for implementation of such collaboration, more appropriate operational structures are needed. In this study, JOTD were explored as part of an expansive 'community of practice' within which the student teacher could be supported through scaffolded learning in a more authentic partnership model.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6851189>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6851189>

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