Collaboration and the Negotiation of Power

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ABSTRACT *This paper deals with the study of the outcomes and the degree of collaboration achieved in a project involving a planning group of university and school-based participants and education students. The group was formed to consider how the practicum component of a course leading to a Graduate Diploma in Education might be improved through collaboration between university and school-based educators. The literature on collaboration and on cultural politics comprises the conceptual framework for the analysis of the data collected. Cultural politics suggests that collaboration involves a struggle over meanings in the interest of particular groups. Based on an analysis of the events in the project, the impact of institutional arrangements and the perceptions of the participants, implications are drawn for what needs to be done to further develop collaborative work between educational institutions. It is suggested that collaboration may be the discourse for the transformation of institutional cultures and subjectivities in universities and schools, in order to attain the benefits of working together which are unavailable through traditional teacher education practices and structures.*

Introduction

"It is on the borders of our work, where we can explore different cultures and assumptions, that the most interesting and innovative things can be achieved" (Giroux in Hargreaves, 1996, p. 119). It was the desire to cross perceived borders and to be innovative which animated the pilot project discussed in this paper. The border was that between schools and a university and the innovation was the formation of a border crossing group for a dual purpose: to work collaboratively to develop the professional or school experience component (praticum) of a course leading to a Graduate Diploma in Education, and to simultaneously study the process of collaboration. While the group achieved positive outcomes in developing the practicum, the participants perceived the process as only partially collaborative and laying the groundwork for future collaboration. As a member of the group with a specific interest in collaboration, I attempt to explain why full collaboration eluded the work of the group, and to identify the insights obtained about the conditions which could facilitate enhanced collaborative planning for teacher education. Other aspects of this project namely, a theoretical framework for the practicum and its integration with academic subjects are discussed by Bloomfield (1997) and Levins (1997).

Background of the Project

Three academic staff (research team) working in the Faculty of Education, Health and Professional Studies, in the University of New England (UNE), initiated the project. The research team comprised the nucleus of the planning group. All three had previous experience as schoolteachers and as supervisors of practice teaching and were committed to working collaboratively with schoolteachers in teacher education. They obtained funding from the university for the collaborative planning of the practicum and the study of the collaborative process.

The practicum is a part of what Smith (2000, p. 25) calls the "conventional model" of teacher education in Australia. At UNE it involves three years' study for an undergraduate degree, followed by a one-year course of postgraduate study for a Graduate Diploma in Education (GDE). This is one of several teacher education programs available at this

university. The course comprises units of study in subjects, such as sociology and psychology of education, in the curriculum of school subjects and teaching methods, and some weeks of practice teaching experience (practicum) in schools. The course is planned and organised by the academic staff to conform with state regulated requirements for the number of units/subjects of study and of the length of the practicum, and is delivered internally as well as by distance education. A formal relationship with schools for practice teaching is mediated by a university-based staff member, the director of school experience, who liaises with the school principals and the teachers involved in supervision of the practicum. The schools in the immediate district of the university were targeted for involvement in the project to improve the practicum, since any changes in the practicum would be trialed in these schools.

Reasons for Reviewing the Practicum

The project's focus on the practicum was decided upon for a number of reasons. There had been no review of the practicum for over seven years. The funds for supervising the practicum had been considerably reduced over the previous ten years with the effect that resources were not available to fund regular visits by university teaching staff to schools during the practicum, as had been the case in earlier years. Contact with students during practicum and with supervising teachers was therefore diminished. Participation in this project provided an occasion for increased contact and discussion with teachers. A focus on the practicum was also perceived as an opportunity for the review of the relevance of its content and structure to current thinking and developments in teacher education. Recently, frameworks of competencies had been developed at state level and nationally for guiding the education of beginning teachers (National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning (NPQTL), 1996).

The practicum was the main avenue for linking the content of the GDE program with the local schools and thus seemed to be the appropriate context for implementing a collaborative approach to its review and improvement. Input from teachers had not been previously sought. The project was thus also appropriate for the study of collaboration, its facilitators and constraints, in a specific institutional context where it had not been previously tried and investigated in any systematic way and thus an innovation for those involved.

Rationale for the Collaborative Approach

Collaboration may be defined as people working together, 'co-labouring', for a common purpose, which they are not likely to achieve if they work independently. Collaboration may therefore benefit from differences in perspectives and expertise (Johnston & Kerper, 1996). Differences may be complementary whereby collaboration is "the process of shared creation: two or more individuals with complementary skills interacting to create a shared understanding that none had previously possessed or could have come to on their own" (Harradine, 1995, p. iv). Differences may stimulate change and development among the participants whereas similarities may encourage competition in relation to who can do things better, or what is more useful or relevant. Hayes and Kelly (2000) maintain that collaboration "entails an equitable relationship, premised upon the sharing of power" (p. 452) which is not assumed in other arrangements such as cooperatives, partnerships or networks.

The decision to work collaboratively on the practicum was based on a desire to reap the potential benefits associated with collaboration in educational settings, which is well documented in the literature. Research on collaboration among teachers in schools (Peters, Dobbins, & Johnson, 1996) shows that the establishment of collaborative teams has a positive effect on teachers' sense of support and security, on removing the sense of isolation they had previously experienced which has been a well documented aspect of teaching (Mctaggart, 1989). Collaboration, involving working closely with colleagues in various tasks, was perceived as providing more opportunities for learning from each other and for heightening

teachers' understanding of teaching/learning processes. It also led to more effective pooling of teachers' expertise and strengths. This appeared to be the case for both experienced and inexperienced teachers.

In their report on the work of teachers as part of the Australian Innovative Links Project, Hattam, Smyth and Smith (1996) note that collaboration allowed for more flexibility in planning and for professional development and for the exchange of knowledge about curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. It was seen as a way of fostering "alternative perspectives which confront the normative ways teachers talk and think about teaching and learning" through questioning assumptions, beliefs, values, conventional practices and whose interests were being served (Smyth in Hattam *et al.,* 1996, p. 47). Thus collaboration led to critical reflection and change.

Collaboration is regarded as the appropriate strategy for professionals working across different agencies in education, particularly in the context of the "full-service school" (White & Wehlage, 1995). A full-service school is one where teachers and school leaders engage with health and welfare professionals, social workers, legal and law enforcement personnel, in order to consider overlapping issues, policies and practices and gaps in the provision of services for children and families deemed to be at risk in life as well as in schooling. Within this context, collaboration is perceived to provide "a more holistic, comprehensive and effective set of responses to children whose problems tend to be complex and multifaceted" (White & Wehlage, 1995, p.23). It helps to avoid fragmentation, duplication and inefficiency of service provision; enables better co-ordination of services and filling in gaps in services leading to improved outcomes, services and service delivery (Stokes & Tyler, 1997).

Collaboration between schools and universities is perceived to inform both theory and practice. Oakes, Hare and Sirotnik (1986) maintain that collaborative research and development efforts overcome the deficiencies of the centralised 'research, development and dissemination' approach to educational change because practitioners have a central place in the process and the school culture is itself the context of collaborative work. They further assert that "The complexity of real school settings and the multiplicity of perspectives of practitioners and students can neither be ignored nor analysed simplistically when they are an integral part of the theory making process" (p. 546). Hargreaves (1996, p.117) also maintains that "It is these ongoing relationships and activities" that straddle university and schools "at the interpersonal and institutional levels, that hold out the best promise for improving and extending the professional knowledge of all educators over time".

Hargreaves (1995, pp. 151-154) summarises the benefits of collaboration in the literature on leadership and teachers' work and development, in terms of the following attributes:

• providing moral support
• increased efficiency
• improved effectiveness
• sharing of burdens and pressures
• realistic expectations about timelines for change
• reduced uncertainty
• increased teacher confidence
• increased capacity for reflection
• organisational responsiveness
• opportunities to learn from others, and
• encouragement for continuous improvement.

Research on 'professional development schools' (PDSs), those which actively participate in the preservice education programs of a university (Goodlad, 1993), indicates that supervising teachers working collaboratively with university staff know more and are "more welcoming and less skeptical about the university teacher education program". They also have a "greater understanding of the expectations" of the university; and university-based staff develop deeper, more collegial relationships with teachers which can involve teaching exchanges across institutions and increased roles for school-based staff in teaching in university courses (Teitel, 1997, pp. 320-321). Goodlad (1993, p. 25) reports an even greater

benefit of collaborative school-university partnerships, that of "simultaneous renewal" of both schooling and teacher education programs.

Research Design

The research team developed a qualitative research design for the project, involving the use of open-ended questionnaires, participant observation and focus groups. The interpretive dimensions of the project resided in the interest to investigate the perceptions, interpretations and meanings held by the participants engaged in planning the practicum. Its critical dimension was manifest in the research team's interest to infuse the practicum with a critical, reflective dimension, which was the outcome of a recent review of teacher education in the Faculty, and to investigate the effectiveness of the collaborative process and the politics of collaborative work.

In addition to the three members of the research team, six additional university-based staff members teaching various subjects in the GDE program were invited to join the planning group. The funding obtained for the project enabled payments to be made to schools for the release of five primary and nine secondary school teachers from the city's state and independent schools, who were nominated by their principals as experienced in supervision, to allow them to attend the planning sessions. Two education students were also invited to participate to ensure a student voice in the group, and an administrative assistant attended as an observer. In total, 25 individuals comprised the planning group.

The planning group met for half a day on four different occasions, over a period of five months. The general format of the meetings included an orientation session, which was followed by discussion of the agenda items and the outcomes of the previous meeting. This was followed by a workshop or structured task oriented small discussion groups, comprised of a mix of school and university-based staff. The morning's activities were concluded with a plenary session. Whilst an agenda was produced by the research team for the first meeting, the agendas for each subsequent meeting were developed in response to the priorities that emerged at the previous meeting. Communication with the participants also occurred between meetings and included the distribution of written summaries of the previous meeting, prepared by the research team, and of stimulus materials aimed at preparation for the following meeting.

Data on participants' perceptions of a range of issues concerning the practicum and collaboration were collected by means of two open-ended questionnaires, one at the beginning and another at the end of the project. The first questionnaire was distributed prior to the first meeting in order to obtain data on participants' perceptions of the nature and function of the practicum, of their associated roles, on the ways in which academic subjects may be integrated with the practicum, on students' experiences and on the participants' expectations of the planning activity. The final questionnaire was used to obtain data on any changes in views about a range of issues concerned with the practicum, the schools' relationship with the university, experiences over the four meetings, and perceptions of what would need to be done to help collaborative work become a mainstream component of teacher education.

The three members of the research team documented the events of each meeting as participant observers. The administrative assistant observer also attended each meeting and recorded her observations. At the final meeting, the group divided into two separate externally facilitated focus groups for discussion, one group comprising the teachers and the other the academic staff and students. These final discussions were audio taped and transcribed for analysis. The research team members also kept individual reflective journals of their individual observations, reactions and impressions of the social dynamics and politics throughout the planning process, the degree of collaboration achieved and of the roles of the various participants.

Degree of Collaboration Achieved

The members of the planning group were willing participants in the deliberations concerned with planning a new program for the practicum. The achievements of the group in improving the practicum were considerable, given the time constraints, and these are described in detail in the report based on the project (Soliman, Bloomfield & Levins, 1997). Despite these achievements, and despite the fact that the majority of the participants expressed enthusiasm for being involved in trailing the revised practicum, the process of planning the practicum was perceived to be only partially collaborative. The reason why this was perceived to be the case is the focus of the rest of this paper. I elaborate that the reasons stem from the institutional context which shaped the agenda of the research team, from perceived cultural differences, and from the power relations associated with them. I try to show how power was enacted by both the research team and the school-based participants in the various activities and events of the project.

Cultural Differences

The literature on collaboration between schools and universities in teacher education highlights not only benefits but also the problems arising from the differences between the occupational cultures of schools and universities (Sparkes & Bloomer, 1993; Brookhart & Loadman, 1996; Hargreaves, 1996; Johnston & Kerper, 1996; Wesser & Bresler, 1996). Sirotnik (1991 in Goodlad, 1993, p. 31) identifies this as "Dealing with Culture Clash" which he describes in the following terms:

> The norms, roles, and expectations of educators in each of these educational realms could not be more different, e.g., the regimen of time and space in schools vs. the relative freedom of these precious commodities in the university setting; an ethic of inquiry in the university vs. an ethic of action and meeting immediate needs in the schools; a merit system with promotion and tenure in the university vs. an egalitarian work ethic in the schools. ... These two cultures are quite different, and it is hard to fit them together in productive, long-term, useful ways.

A perception of difference, of distance and of separation in the relationship between schools and the university was evident in the respondents' answer to the question "What should be the relationship of schools and the university in connection with the practicum?" They responded in terms of wanting to form a relationship which would "bring the two groups closer together", in which there was "greater communication and awareness of others' roles" and which would be "interactive," "co-operative," "collaborative," "consultative," "continuous," "supportive," "strong and close," "constructive," "free" and "comfortable".

Perceptions of differences were also provided in their written expectations: that the meetings would result in "closer co-operation and collaboration;" "a better understanding of teachers' perspectives and teachers' expectations of students;" "opportunity for teachers to make a positive and lasting input to teacher education in the university;" "a meeting of minds" and "breaking down of the boundary between them and us." When the meaning of collaboration was explored in small groups, the ideas of "bridging the gap between the university and schools" was raised, as well as the notion of a 'two-way process of sharing information and knowledge,' of 'joint ownership', 'compromise and trust' to be achieved. One participant commented that the term was also used to mean "working with the enemy".

At the fourth and last planning meeting, when participants again reflected upon the meaning of collaboration as a result of their experiences in the planning group, there were more comments which recalled some of the earlier expressed differences in terms of "crossing boundaries", "exposing oneself to scrutiny", "taking risks", "achieving the right balance of academic involvement acceptable to teachers", and "not threatening or marginalising teachers". A persistent view of differences was evident in comments that academics were not working "closely enough with schools" and a "problem of each group not understanding fully what the other group is doing".

Cultural Politics

Through the structure of the planning group, the research team sought to facilitate dialogue and collaboration across the perceived cultural differences between the school and university-based participants. This was done without the awareness that comes from a retrospective reflection on the processes involved in the events of the project. In hindsight, and from the perspective of the conceptual framework of cultural politics, it is possible to interpret the events in the project as cross-cultural communication and as an activity involving the management of power relations.

Poststructuralists Jordan and Weedon (1995, p.11) claim that "*everything* in social and cultural life is fundamentally to do with *power*. Power is at the centre of cultural politics ... *all practices that have meaning – involve relations of power*". The legitimation of dominance — or how inequality is made to appear logical and acceptable — by one group over another, and the struggle to transform such relations, is the central concern of cultural politics. The conceptual framework of cultural politics facilitates the interpretation of the events and interactions in the life of the project in terms of how 'techniques' of power were used by both the research team and the school-based participants to advance the interests of their respective groups. The analysis of this process suggests that the degree of collaboration achieved was due not only to the constraints of the particular institutional context, but also to the controls exercised by the research team as discussed in the following sections.

Unequal Project Ownership

The initial planning of the project was the work of the research team and did not include the other academic staff, teachers and students. The initiative to conduct the project, the development of the application for funds to conduct the project was their initiative and did not include any input from colleagues, teachers or students. The research team also planned the contents of the initial questionnaire and decided which schools would be contacted for inviting teacher participation.

These unilateral initiatives were partly due to the strong orientation to 'outcomes' by the research team without an equal emphasis on the process dimension of the project. All the project participants did not equally share interest in the dual focus of the project, in developing the practicum and in exploring collaboration. Thus an "ethic of care" (Thompson & Gitlin, 1995) for relationships did not permeate the planning group. As Hayes and Kelly (2000) observe, participants in a collaborative relationship must be willing to consider the relationship "as important in its own right and not simply the work or the product that results" (p. 467). In addition to the outcomes orientation, there was no institutional memory in the Faculty of collaborative planning with teachers, and structures were not in place for ready access to the views of teachers since regular consultation with the teaching profession was not Faculty policy and practice. In retrospect, teacher/student input in formulating the aim of the project and the initial questionnaire would have been an advantage as this could have included a more collaborative approach right from the beginning. The school-based participants perceived their lack of initial input as undercutting collaboration.

From the perspective of the research team, the four meetings of the group seemed to be collaboratively planned. The first meeting clearly indicated that the whole group's orientation in planning the practicum was towards a competency-based framework. This framework, therefore, formed the central component of the agenda for the second meeting. Priorities for discussion over the three meetings were also developed at the first meeting and included identifying constraints upon planning, the structure and the knowledge base of the practicum, roles and relationships, assessment, and differences between practicums in primary and secondary schools.

Ownership of the subsequent agendas did not, however, lie with the whole group and the research team developed the details of the agendas for individual meetings. The team

members also assumed the leadership and management roles during the four meetings rather than sharing these with members of the planning group. This would have dispersed leadership more widely in the planning group and thus strengthened the collaborative effort (Sirotnik, 1991, in Goodlad, 1993, p. 33).

The flow of information between meetings was also one-way, from the research team to the rest. There was no mechanism in place for involving teachers in the process of agenda setting or with preparing minutes of meetings which were seen by the planning group to more clearly communicate the decisions made than the summaries which the research team provided. As one member of the school-based group put it: "I kept feeling that every time I came back to a new meeting that the direction changed again", suggesting her perception of a lack of clear and shared focus for the meetings. The school-based participants also preferred the development of an "action plan" following on from each meeting. These techniques were seen to better enable teachers involved in any meetings to convey the decisions made to their colleagues in schools. This action plan format indicated the teachers' desire for tangible results and clear direction which was not initially appreciated by the research team. When commenting upon their experiences of the project, some school-based participants observed that interaction was "a difficult process due to unequal responsibilities and different perspectives."

As input into the deliberations, the research team also sent out resource materials as background reading for the participants, along with the summary of the previous meeting, on the assumption that a common background of information would enhance collaboration. A member of the research team took the initiative to introduce information on a developmental model for student learning within the practicum (Furlong & Maynard, 1995) at the third meeting. This was to provide a framework for conceptualising the development of competencies over time and of the appropriate roles of supervisors of student teachers. By presenting only one framework rather than several for consideration, and by not inviting teachers to present a framework, the research team positioned itself as the experts, in the context of a meeting where challenging the relevance or utility of the model was not possible without previous knowledge of it.

The introduction of this expert knowledge could have been interpreted as an instance of 'silencing' the school-based participants by the use of what Fiske (1991) characterises as "imperialist" knowledge, created and sanctioned within institutions, as distinct from the teachers' practical "local" knowledge. On the one hand, difference in expertise can enhance the outcome of collaborative work but difference in expertise can also disempower others if they do not feel that they too have an area of expertise and room for input in developing the project. In hindsight, it would have been better to introduce this knowledge later, after giving teachers a chance to express their own views and knowledge.

Control of Time, Resources and Space

It became apparent that time limitations constrained collaboration in the project. The time schedule for the project was closely linked to the time available to the research team for completing the project, the deadlines set by the university for finalising print materials in relation to the practicum, and to the amount of funding made available for covering teachers' time release to attend meetings. The time available proved to be a constraint upon developing a detailed common frame of reference for planning the practicum. In this respect, the university culture drove the agenda for the project.

The amount of funds granted for the project did not allow for the sufficient number of meetings necessary for deliberation upon differences and similarities among the participants in philosophical positions on teacher education. Accordingly, to save time, a list of assumptions in relation to the practicum held by the research team was drawn up and distributed at the second meeting in order to determine to what extent the members of the group were thinking along similar lines. However, only a limited time was available for discussion of these and not enough to determine to what extent assumptions were shared by all.

Similarly, time did not permit teasing out perceptions of differences in meaning of the concepts of co-operation, consultation and collaboration (Idol, Nevin & Paolucci-Whitcomb, 1994). Time also curtailed debating the proposed structures for the practicum by the requirement to meet the deadline set by the university for the publication of the Practice Teaching Handbook of information which fell shortly after the second meeting. The proposal of a developmental framework for the practicum was presented and accepted at an extraordinary meeting with other members of the Faculty present, and at a time when not all the members of the planning group could attend. Information about this framework and its acceptance was presented as part of the agenda at a subsequent meeting. These procedures indicate the lack of a shared agenda and of group ownership of the content and organisation of all the meetings.

While work in small groups on the competency framework (NPQTL, 1996) adopted by the group for planning the practicum was collaborative, the time spent on the task of deliberating and deciding which competencies were appropriate was constrained by the limited time available for the whole project. The research team decided that due to time constraints, only three out of the seven categories of teacher competencies could be considered for analysis, and also selected the ones they thought were most important. Knowledge about the teachers' preferences was not sought.

The participation of the teachers was made possible by the research team obtaining funds to enable their release from their teaching duties for their participation during their working hours rather than relying on their goodwill to participate after hours. Financial support was not sought from the state department of education for the project. The participation of the academic staff was not funded. The availability of funds for teachers demonstrated the Faculty's commitment and support for the proposed collaborative work. However, payment for attendance also brought forth individuals who were not strongly motivated to engage in collaborative work on the practicum. This was reflected in their attendance, in the quality of their engagement with the project and in their use of the resource materials. The true degree of commitment to the project may have been more obvious if attendance had not been funded. For these reasons the participation of the two groups was not on an equal footing, and the teachers participation could be interpreted as "contrived" collaboration (Hargreaves, 1995).

The meetings were all held in a university building, where rooms were available free of charge, (a convenience and an important cost saving for the research team), but a location readily identified by others as university territory. A change of setting to a more neutral location or the varying of meetings between schools and the university was an expressed preferred alternative of the school-based participants.

Inadequate Communication

The planning group was formed with the intention of acknowledging teachers' voices and providing opportunity for their expression. The constraint of time and funds, allowing for only four meetings, and the strong task orientation of the planning meetings precluded the occurrence of "Real communication or dialogue," which is a central characteristic of collaborative work, "enabling participants to gain a deeper level of understanding of the constraints upon one another's practice" (Oakes *et al.*, 1986, p. 227). Time was not available for extended periods of conversation, for defining terms and concepts clearly, for checking understanding, for rephrasing and reshaping ideas, which occurs in meaningful conversation (Brookhart & Loadman, 1996, p. 8). Time was not available for in-depth communication which could develop sensitivity to the cultural differences in the worlds of the two groups and thus enable the participants to "transcend boundaries, to see several perspectives simultaneously and function as bi-cultural" (Brookhart & Loadman, 1996, p. 2).

Trust, support and openness are perceived to be the heart of collaborative relationships, which cannot be mandated (Nias *et al.*, 1989 in Sparkes & Bloomer, 1993, p. 176). Sufficient trust was not established between the two groups over the four meetings to enable them to speak frankly of their experiences of the project in a mixed group of participants. Therefore,

on the final occasion, the two groups met separately and their discussion was taped with no identifiable names evident on the transcripts. The students were in the university-based group.

The use of language that would encourage collaboration was both a challenge and a constraint. The commonly used terms "teachers" and "academics" seemed divisive and not descriptive enough of the shared task. The research team therefore opted for the longer terms of school-based and university or tertiary-based participants or teacher educators, to promote the idea of a common goal and similar interests, and closer professional identities. This was a linguistic strategy to equalise status but also an oppositional and transformative one, to redefine the roles of teachers from supervisors of student teachers to teacher educators.

While the members of the planning group did learn more about each other's expectations and beliefs and about the constraints in which each group operated, it was not sufficient to eliminate some misconceptions about what was happening in the project. The school-based people were somewhat disadvantaged by not knowing what powers the planning group had to make decisions about the practicum, and about how decisions about courses were made in the Faculty, knowledge which the university participants possessed but had not communicated clearly enough. The lack of understanding of the process of decision making lead to the school-based group misconstruing the behaviour of the tertiary people as indecisive and "uncertain about what powers they had to make decisions," in relation to the practicum. The process also appeared to them much slower and seemed to involve more deliberation at various levels than it did in schools. As one of the participants commented "it seems to me to be a different culture if you're talking about process".

On the positive side, the small group discussion at every session facilitated active participation and interaction. For similar reasons, the agenda items were posed in the form of questions as often as possible. Morning tea breaks were also provided to allow time for getting acquainted, for informal social interaction and informal conversation. Social interaction on these occasions was relaxing and contributed to a degree of social cohesion.

Competition over Valued Knowledge

Competition over who is to define professionally worthwhile knowledge kept surfacing over the duration of the project. In retrospect this is not surprising since " Cultural politics involve a struggle over meaning — to fix meaning, to keep it fixed in the interest of particular groups or redefine it or change it" (Jordan & Weedon, 1995, p. 545). While the historical relationship between schools and universities has been "one in which universities have traditionally enjoyed the privilege of leading educational reform" (Hayes & Kelly, 2000, p. 453), the invitation to participate in the planning of the practicum was a challenge to this position. It affirmed the importance of first-hand knowledge of the current education system for teacher education and the expertise of the school-based participants to make a significant input into teacher education. They did not, however, express "parity of esteem" for the knowledge and differing expertise of the university-based participants or recognition of their complementary and equally valid "distinctive interests", qualities emphasised by Grundy (1996, p. 12) as important for the successful development of professional partnerships. Instead of parity of esteem, they assumed that the university participants had been too long away from schools and thus were out of touch with the realities of contemporary schooling, which should be remedied by visiting classrooms. One of the school-based participants suggested that collaboration should change the way "university folk look at the whole process of teaching," while another expressed the view that tertiary staff "knew very little about the school system" which was perceived to determine "what the kids learn when they are in school". Therefore, the tertiary people would "have to be brought up to speed on what the system is actually out there". The issue of educating students to analyse and to critique current practice, a concern of the tertiary staff, in addition to training student teachers to fit into the system, was not discussed.

The university-based participants thus perceived themselves judged to be the 'other' and deficient in what was considered important 'practical' knowledge. This perception by the

teachers seemed to be based more on the views and the performance of student teachers rather than on their own knowledge of the qualifications and experience of the university-based participants, or on knowledge of the content of their teaching subjects, and seemed to devalue their 'academic' knowledge.

The teachers also asserted the importance of their gate-keeping role regarding the assessment of practice teaching, the screening device for maintaining standards for entry to the profession. The Faculty had withdrawn from assessment of the practicum for financial reasons and not educational ones. The emphasis by the teachers on the supremacy of the practicum, as the decisive test of competence for teaching, rather than as an opportunity for learning and for making mistakes, also appeared to undervalue the academic component of the program. Additionally, difficulties with the performance of some student teachers was attributed by a school-based participant to the Faculty having low entrance requirements, which was a misconception, nevertheless the comment was interpreted by academic staff as a slur on the university's status.

Some school-based staff perceived the possibility of mutual professional development through exchanges of staff as a form of collaboration, however, more emphasis was placed upon the desirability of tertiary teacher educators learning more about the current schooling system than upon somehow ensuring reciprocal learning. There were only a few comments made to suggest the school-based staff were interested to learn from tertiary colleagues about their research, teaching and scholarship. Easy access to information about the interests and activities of Faculty staff was, however, not available to teachers at that time as it now is on their web pages.

What seemed implicit in teachers' views was the primacy of practical, contextual knowledge in teacher education while the university staff also affirmed the significance of critical, reflective skills and knowledge. The residual impression was one of devaluing the contribution of tertiary colleagues. As a result, a feeling of anger and disappointment was expressed by some of the university participants at the impression that teachers perceived their work irrelevant and of little value, on the basis of meagre knowledge. Grundy's (1996) comment in relation to professional research partnerships is relevant here as she notes that: "To gloss over the differential expertise of the researching partners is to call into question the very nature of and rationale for the partnership" (p. 11). It is important that each party in the collaborative effort recognises and appreciates that the others have something valuable and complementary to offer for the education of teachers.

This appears to be the case in the model of teacher education developed between Oxford University and Oxfordshire schools. McIntyre (1991, p. 128) describes how the school-based teacher educators provide "contextualised perspectives which complement and challenge the more abstract perspectives which university staff can offer." The university-based teacher educators are perceived to be best placed to offer "a wide knowledge of differing practices, thorough understanding of relevant theoretical and research literature, considered analyses of assumptions and values implicit in different practices, and skills in relating different kinds of knowledge and concerns" (p. 127). McIntyre advises university staff to resist the pressure and the temptation to emphasise practical concerns and criteria in their work since "There is no lack of people in schools who are just as able, and much better placed to discuss teaching in ways which reflect practical classroom perspectives" (p. 127). This advice is made in the context of a model which includes nearly a year-long internship in schools, and thus provides extended opportunity for the students to gain practical knowledge and experience which is not available for students in the GDE course.

Implications for Ongoing Collaborative Work

While this project on the practicum was a pilot study in a specific context, it nevertheless provides some valuable insights about the appropriate conditions for managing collaborative work and the associated power relations, in a context where there has been no previous collaboration and where there is a strong sense of cultural differences between schools and the university.

The issue of sufficient time and support, which became evident in this project, for the adequate exploration of the differences in understandings, values and expectations, indicates that the amount of time needed for even preliminary collaborative work can be seriously underestimated. Teitel's (1997) longitudinal study of PDSs indicates that it may take up to five years of involvement by school and university-based staff "for complex interorginazational arrangements like the PDSs to take hold" (p. 330). Given that collaboration frequently falters on communication, rather than assume mutual understanding and consensus, effort is needed on behalf of all the participants to communicate clearly, openly, sincerely and truthfully, without implying unfounded expertise or authority (Gilbert & Dewar, 1995, pp. 13-14). Much time needs to be devoted to the sharing of information and the discussion of issues and problems, to conversation focused on professional issues and on deliberation, in order to develop a common conceptual framework, and to tease out differences and similarities in points of view and their implications for the group's work. Detailed, in-depth knowledge of each other's work reduces the chance of forming misconceptions or stereotypical views and increases the likelihood of developing sensitivity to institutional cultural differences. Collaboratively planned in-service education for school-based staff could be provided in order to clarify the university's roles and expectations in supervision and mentoring of practice teaching. This could be enhanced by opportunities to visit each other's work sites in order to acquire up-to-date information on work practices and work organisation. Introducing the opportunity for teachers to work as adjunct staff in the university with academics for a semester could be investigated, such as the program described by Russell and Chapman in this issue.

Collaborative work provides an opportunity to examine what areas of school and university-based work overlap and what areas deviate; what areas are complementary and what areas can be redefined. The process needs to provide opportunity for everyone's input to be equally considered in guiding the content of the work, to ensure the development of shared ownership and responsibility as well as commitment to the work, and parity of esteem. No group's contribution should be deemed of superior status.

Institutional support, such as valuing and rewarding collaborative work is needed in both the school and university sectors. In universities, working with school-based colleagues needs to be regarded as a part of a staff member's job in teacher education and a component of workload, rather than as an add-on or as only professional service. It needs to be built into the organisation and work routines of university staff (Teitel, 1997) if collaboration is to be institutionalised.

The initial or preservice professional education of teachers is currently the responsibility of universities in the state, and thus of university-based teacher educators. Teacher education is not a duty of schoolteachers and is not written into their job descriptions. Teachers' interest and level of commitment to teacher education is therefore an individual matter rather than a requirement of their work. Under these circumstances, teacher education is not likely to have a high priority in schools, and is likely to be marginal to the school's main purpose, that of educating young people. The onus at present for developing partnerships with schools therefore rests with the university. Changes in this arrangement are necessary if collaboration in teacher education is to be an ongoing activity. A designated and specifically trained teacher educator in schools, as is the arrangement in some professional development schools (Teitel, 1997), is an option worth investigating. Such persons could be designated to facilitate collaboration between schools and the university and work more closely with the university's field experience director.

To move to a position where collaborative teacher education is a part of the job description of qualified teachers needs systemic support, i.e. from the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the University. This could be in the form of appropriately rewarding the efforts of teachers to develop their skills in mentoring and supervision and the time they devote to teacher education. Or it may be the case that some schools could be designated as professional development schools for conducting the practicum (Zeichner, 1990) and staffed accordingly with teachers who devote a third or a half of their time to teacher education. Increased non-traditional teaching time for teachers devoted to teacher education in schools would of course need to be resourced. The establishment of such

schools could be the focus of collaborative research. The provision of a collaboratively developed postgraduate course, as an additional qualification for teachers, which is recognised and rewarded by the DET, for the study and development of collaborative work and school-based teacher education co-ordinated with a university-based program, could also be developed.

Equal attention should be paid to both the content and the process dimensions of collaborative work. It would be ideal if two people could monitor the work, one for progress in deliberations over content and the other for development in the process, so that neither is neglected. The two monitors could confer regularly and report back to the group on its progress and thus encourage the collaborative group to be critically reflective of its own work.

Collaborative work seems to depend on a diverse range of skills and attitudes which are not necessarily attributes of teacher educators: such as the formation and management of an effective working group, sustained dialogue, the development of trust among group members, the ability to tolerate ambiguity, misunderstanding, and differences in point of view, and to be willing to continue the discussion even when it makes one uncomfortable (Wasser & Bresler, 1996, pp. 10-11). If collaborative work is to become mainstream in teacher education attention will need to be paid to the cultivation of these group dynamic skills and attitudes.

Facilitators of collaborative work need to be mindful of the participants' level of experience, and that moving from individual to collaborative work is likely to involve cultural change for the participants. They will need support in changing their work practices and their way of thinking about them through appropriate professional development activities which could include democratic decision making, interpersonal skills to work collaboratively (e.g. active listening) and skills of critical reflection and collective inquiry. Workshops could be designed to consider the advantages of collaborative work as well as help participants deal with their anxieties about participating in the process.

The development of a database on teachers' expertise in a region would facilitate invitations from tertiary staff for their participation in lectures and workshops. Similarly, a database on the areas of expertise of university staff should also be available to all schools in the district to facilitate communication and interaction.

Conclusion

The practicum project may be viewed as the beginning of a much needed and improving articulation between the sectors involved in pre-service teacher education. This improvement can only occur through continuing support for such work and the enthusiasm of members of the education sectors acting to achieve common and valued goals. This requires good will and funds allocated to resource the management and organisation of the desired collaborative work.

The establishment of a collaborative group where it did not previously exist creates and legitimates a possible new social relation in an institution. The discourse of collaboration provides an opportunity to redefine social practices and structures and their meanings and value. This was attempted in this practicum project with some degree success. The project was a valuable boundary crossing activity for the participants and a form of resistance to the "intellectual hegemony" of universities "to control credentialed knowledge " which negates teachers' professional culture (Elliot 1991, p. 119). The discourse of collaboration also provides concepts and structures for reconstructing professional identities and the definition of differences in patterns of work and of their valuation. Collaboration thus has the potential to transform subjectivities and institutional culture.

Acknowledgments

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