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In Search of the Essence of a Good School: School Characteristics Leading to Successful PDS Collaboration

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Abstract: Professional Development Schools (PDSs) are collaborative ventures between schools and teacher training institutions. We identify the characteristics of a school that lead to successful PDS collaboration, relating them to Teitel's model (2003) that merges the principal standards of collaboration with the stages necessary for developing a PDS. We then describe an external evaluation of a PDS in action in Israel, noting that it took several years to achieve some of the objectives; others have still not been met. Finally, we describe the school's characteristics that contributed to its success as a PDS.

Introduction

The theory behind Professional Development Schools (PDS) is that collaboration between teacher training institutions and schools facilitates change and improvement to both. Full, meaningful collaboration between the institutions narrows the distance between them and links theory to practice – an essential prerequisite for good teacher training and for improved teaching and learning in schools. The professional development of all participants (student teachers, subject teachers and mentor teachers) occurs in the learning community established in the PDS through joint learning and research.

PDS has several main objectives:

- improving teacher and student teacher training;
- professionalising school staff;
- advancing student teachers and teachers' collaborative research processes; and
- enhancing students' learning.

This paper discusses the concept of PDS, the considerations involved in choosing a PDS school, standards and targets in PDS development and the characteristics that contribute to the success of a PDS.

Professional Development Schools

PDSs are innovative institutions formed through partnerships between professional education programs and schools (Clark, 1999). A PDS is a collaborative effort to improve the initial preparation of teachers and enhance classroom teachers' professional development. The PDS is a learning-centered community, and the partners are guided by a common vision of teaching and learning that is grounded in research and practitioner knowledge. PDS partners share responsibility for professionals and students; they blend their expertise and resources to meet their shared goals (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2001).

As Darling-Hammond (1994) explains:

Professional Development Schools aim to provide new models of teacher education and development by serving as exemplars of practice, builders of knowledge, and vehicles for communicating professional understanding among teacher educators, novices, and veteran teachers. They support the learning of prospective and beginning teachers by creating settings in which novices enter professional practice by working with expert practitioners, enabling veteran teachers to renew their own professional development and assume new roles as mentors, university adjuncts, and teacher leaders. They allow school and university educators to engage jointly in research and rethinking of practice. In order to accomplish their goals, PDS partners create new roles, responsibilities, and structures; they utilize their resources differently.

The idea of partnerships between teacher training institutions and schools arose as a result of research by Goodlad and others and publication of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's 1983 report, **A Nation at Risk**. In England and Wales, mandatory PDS partnerships have existed since 1992, but the decision to establish the partnerships was political and economic rather than professional.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2001) identified four stages of PDS development:

1. **Beginning Level:** verbal commitments, organisation and initial work amongst PDS partnerships;
2. **Developing Level:** partners are engaged in PDS work in many ways but their supporting institutions have not yet made changes in their policies
3. **Standard Level:** partners work together effectively, resulting in positive outcomes for all learners. Partnering institutions have made changes in policies and practices that support PDS participants in meaningful ways.
4. **Leading Level:** changes in policy and practice in partner institutions; the PDS partnership has reached its potential for leveraging change outside its boundaries.

Considerations involved in choosing a PDS school

Opinions differ over what kind of school lends itself best to the PDS model. At the beginning of the 1990s, when the PDS model first appeared in the United States, it was assumed that not every school would prove to be suitable for collaboration (Silberstein, Back & Ariav, 2001; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). It was claimed that because students tend to learn from role models, only schools demonstrating appropriate models for emulation could be considered (Robinson & Darling-Hammond, 1994).

By contrast, in England the Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education recommended that every school should become involved in teacher training. It regarded the connection between teacher

training institutions and schools as an opportunity for teachers' development and empowerment, enabling them to keep abreast of research and new professional practices.

According to Silberstein et al. (2001), the schools best suited to PDS are autonomous and run as independent pedagogical-social entities. They believe that such schools have a culture of collaboration and a tradition of continuing teacher education programs, regarding the professional development of their staff as crucial to their own development.

Robinson & Darling-Hammond (1994) indicated that congruence of the interests of the teacher training institution and the school was the most significant characteristics of a PDS that be successful in achieving the partnership's targets.

Schools have specific interests unconnected to PDS, and participation in PDS imposes a heavy burden in terms of time and resources. What, therefore, motivates schools to participate in the project? There may be ideological or practical reasons, but in order to achieve collaboration, the joint interests of each body – school and academic institution – must be taken into consideration (Silberstein, Ben-Peretz & Greenfeld, 2006).

Additional criteria success include the creation of mutual trust and respect; genuine sharing in decision making; clearly-worded and focused tasks; planning of achievable practical work; the commitment and involvement of senior staff from both institutions; funding; agreement for cooperation over a long period of time (reflected by both parties signing a contract); and effective communication channels between the institutions.

Standards and targets in PDS development

Lee Teitel's 'pyramid model' (2003) combines the main standards of collaboration with the stages necessary for developing PDSs. Two standards constitute its foundation:

1. **Collaboration:** creating collaboration and developing it into a relationship of mutual commitment and interaction.
2. **Structures, resources and roles:** methods of organisation and operation of the partnership (new roles, responsibilities, decision-making processes, organisational structures, resources and resource allocation processes).

Without these standards, there can be no PDS collaboration.

The third standard, based on these two standards, is the 'learning community': the core of PDS. In a learning community, the emphasis is placed on teaching-learning activities. The learning community contributes to the professional development of all participants. Academic college faculty members contribute their academic-theoretical knowledge and school staff, especially the mentor teachers, contribute their practical knowledge. The student teachers contribute their outlook and experiences. The final and most important stage is the outcome *the enhancement of the students' achievements*, which is the ultimate objective of PDS.

Two other standards must also be in place throughout the various processes:

1. **Accountability and quality assurance:** evaluation of the partnership and of its results through methods that obligate the participants to account for their actions.
2. **Diversity and equity:** evaluation and training of a diverse group of teachers who will provide learning opportunities to all the learners.

As Teitel indicates, one of the most important targets is the establishment of a learning community. Professional learning communities play a pivotal role in the development and empowerment of staff.

Shulman (1997) stresses the importance of developing the teaching community into a professional community that learns and progresses.

The success of learning communities of teachers will depend greatly on the members' commitment, as well as on their capacity to adjust to the perceived needs of all the members (Leite, 2006). For Darling-Hammond (2001,9), 'in a genuine community, people communicate their goals, revise them together and work collectively to achieve them'. It means that learning that takes place within a learning community is both a social and a personal enterprise, and results from responding to and building on each other's ideas, and requires multiple viewpoints to be taken into consideration. Hence, a community becomes a productive learning environment (Sumsion & Patterson 2004).

According to Cohen & Hill (2001) and Santiago (2002), the professional development of teachers may lead to enhanced student achievements, but only when certain conditions are in place: the professional development occurs over an extended period, focuses on the specific pedagogy of the curriculum, and relates to the curriculum. The participants' special professional experience in terms of content-related teaching-learning and student achievements; their theoretical knowledge of learning-teaching subjects; and clarification of the social role of the school and of the teacher should all be reflected in learning communities.

The collaboration between school and college

Our college of education adopted the PDS model in 2000. Since then, the PDS has been the subject of an external evaluation system that has examined different aspects of two schools ('A' and 'B') that joined the PDS system at the outset.

Mentor teachers at these schools indicated consistently that, in personal terms, the benefits accrued had not been great, and that the target of collaboration in relation to professional advancement had been achieved only to a limited extent. Many of the targets, such as that of building an institutionalised learning community, were only attained after several years. A mutual sense of caution sometimes prevented genuine discussion on knowledge, hidden knowledge, and judgements in solving pedagogical and didactic problems (Ariav & Kfir, 2002; Ariav & Emanuel, 2003, 2004). Our experience with School C was somewhat different.

Any school interested in joining the PDS project at our college must meet certain conditions: it must be willing to integrate a number of subjects, several method instructors, and enough student teachers to enable resources to be pooled and to facilitate the option of working in interdisciplinary contexts; it must allocate an hour or two a week of the school timetable to work in a 'learning community'; and it must commit to participation in the PDS for approximately five years. Both college faculty and school administrative staff participate in joint steering committees and in training programs for the professional development of the teachers, and conduct staff meetings to develop rapport and to construct a PDS model. The school appoints a staff member to liaise between it and the college.

Much depends on the success of the PDS in the first year of partnership, because of schools' concerns over its contribution to them and their teachers' professional development. One measure is the desire of all participants to continue the partnership beyond the first year.

The school's characteristics

In 2005 another high school ('C') with 800 students and 93 teachers that has been classified as one of the ten best schools in the country (in terms of academic performance) joined the PDS. The teachers have excellent academic qualifications: all hold bachelors degrees in their main subjects, some have masters degrees and a few have doctorates. In this school there is hardly any turnover of teachers apart from a limited number who leave for personal reasons. The fact that the staff is permanent is an indication of satisfaction. None of its school and college partners has had any previous experience with PDS.

In the first year of operation, two disciplines, Computer Sciences (11 student teachers and two mentor teachers) and Social Sciences (nine student teachers and five mentor teachers) were involved. Most mentors were experienced teachers who held key positions in school. The college liaison person was a method instructor and lecturer with 20 years' experience and a PhD; two method instructors represented the school: one was a Computer Sciences method instructor with a PhD and 15 years' experience in academia, who also lectured at the college in the Computer Sciences faculty, and the other was a Social Sciences method instructor with a masters degree and 20 years' experience in academia, who lectured at the college in the Social Sciences faculty.

In School C in the PDS, the student teachers were integrated into the operations of the entire school, from inclusion in the supervisory duty roster to participation in school projects, taking lessons, and providing individual instruction. We established a learning community in which we discussed different issues and constructed together learning materials, on-line days activities, and examinations. Some of the issues raised in the meetings concerned also school projects conducted in with full PDS collaboration with the learning community. The main project was the on-line day's activities during which students studied online from home. The groundwork for the on-line day's activities was laid over several months and involved teachers and school coordinators in a considerable amount of work. The student teachers and college staff fully cooperated with the mentor teachers by working with them on the preparations. The student teachers also tutored weaker students on learning materials and provided help in preparing research and final matriculation assignments.

Purposes and objectives

In the school, these were defined at three levels:

1. **cooperation in the social-institutional field**, revealing the school to the student teachers as an active institution and including them its activities, such as facilitating a volunteer project, coping with the problems of special needs students, and collaborating with teachers in routine tasks during the breaks over the course of the school day;
2. **cooperation in learning**, constructing and running on-line learning in school; guiding research and projects; providing individual assistance for weaker students; integrating student teachers into teaching and into writing, assessing and marking examinations; and creating a current affairs area; and
3. **professional advancement**, the development of a professional learning community comprising student teachers, subject teachers and mentor teachers.

We considered this level to be the most important.

We adapted Teitel's model to achieve viable targets (see Figure 1); these were devised in such a way as to be dependent on the preceding target, but at the same time two processes were in progress: deepening and establishing the previous target, and activating the next target.

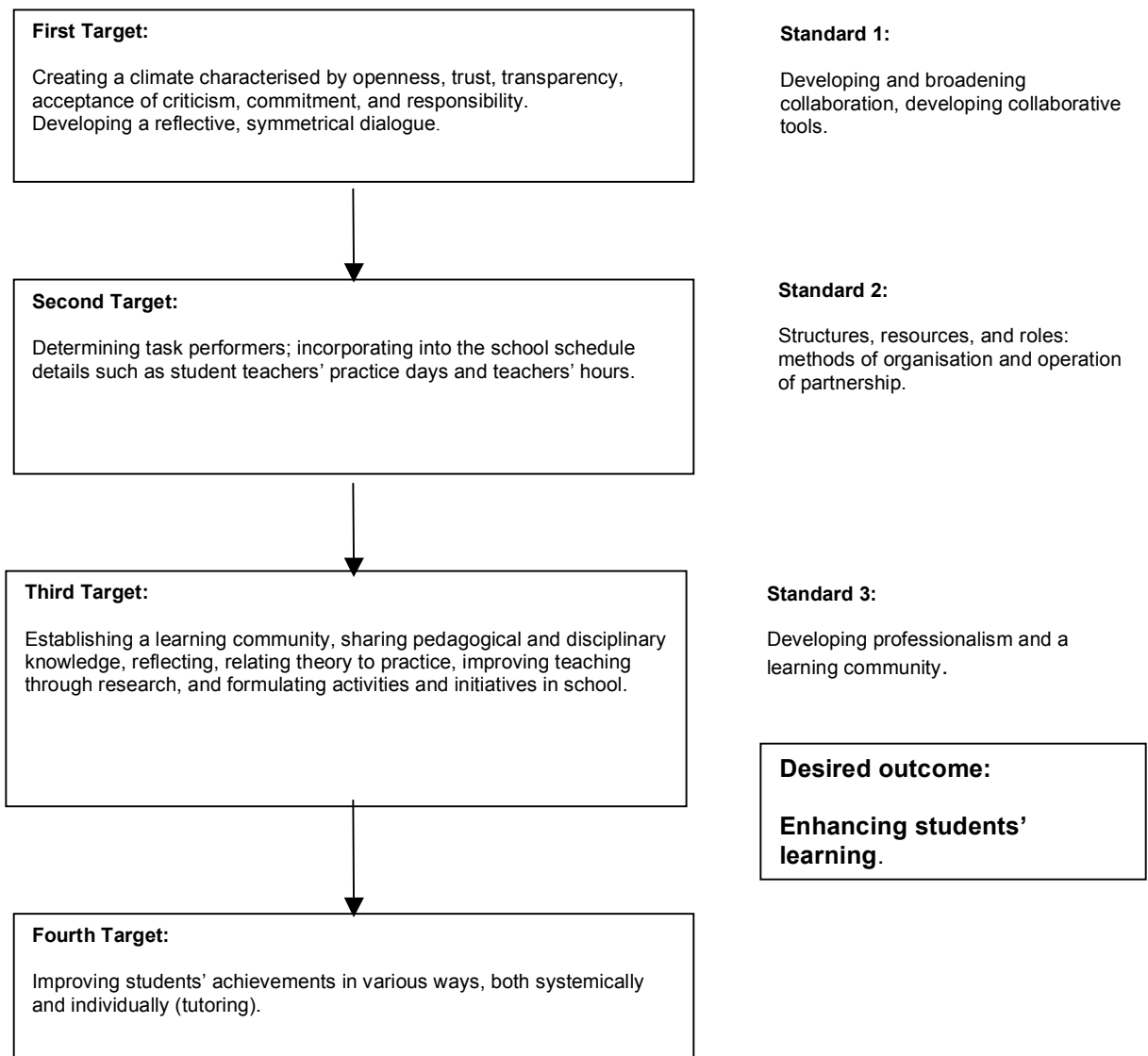


Figure 1: Targets for High School C, based on Teitel's pyramid

Achievement of the four targets will lead to a fundamental improvement in teacher training practices, contribute significantly to mentor teachers' professional development, and enhance teaching-learning processes and student achievement. In addition, it will facilitate dialogue among all PDS participants, which in turn will establish new knowledge, and ensure that the participants' special interests are acknowledged.

The first target was the construction of the system from an organisational point of view; to define the roles of task performers, to plan the school timetable in accordance with the student teachers' practice days; to organise the steering committees, and to determine criteria for student teachers' evaluation.

The second target was the creation of a relationship of trust and cooperation, and the representation of the school as an active institution for the student teachers, and their participation in its activities and in all the tasks of a teacher.

The third target was the development of a learning community comprising of all the participants and relating to all of their interests. The topics and the activities chosen for the staff meetings took the school's special interests into consideration on the premise that both the college and the student teachers benefited equally from the learning processes. The staff-meeting model we adopted included four components of equal weight: joint activity construction; enrichment (an expansion of disciplinary-didactic knowledge); pedagogical issues (such as analysing and documenting lessons); and routine, ongoing concerns related to the school (see Figure 2).

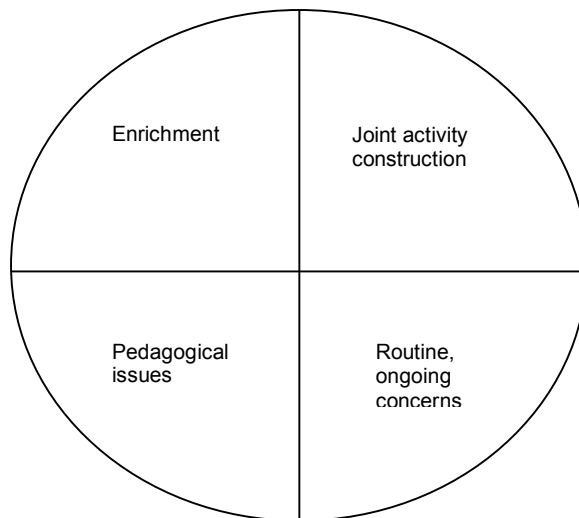


Figure 2: Staff meeting components, School C

The fourth target was enhancing the students' achievements, the ultimate goal of the collaboration. Learners' achievements may be enhanced in various ways, such as tutoring, both individually and collectively.

The most important recommendation made by the accompanying research on PDS, which had a bearing on determining our aims in the first year, was that the structure and conduct of the staff meeting should be re-examined. It appeared that a more balanced structure was needed that was better placed to meet teachers' requirements, such as deciding that once every two or three weeks the meeting should be devoted solely to the instruction and guidance needs of the student teachers and that the other meetings should be given over to the needs of the teachers (the student teachers would participate in these meetings, but the issues discussed would be decided upon by the teachers according to their needs) (Ariav & Emmanuel, 2004).

The studies of Robinson & Darling-Hammond (1994) indicate that the most important factor determining success is acknowledging the participants' joint interests, a factor that helped us formulate the purposes and objectives for the first year. As a result, the development of a learning community and the realisation of mutual interests were the most significant factors that guided us in planning our purposes and objectives in the high school.

Our research evolved from an impression that in this school certain processes were occurring at a faster rate than those described in the accompanying research on PDS. According to both the research findings and a comparison with the other schools involved in the project, it was clear that this school was proving more successful. We looked at the criteria for schools collaborating in PDS as recommended by the literature and sought to verify the characteristics of this particular school. In this way, we hoped to identify the criteria for choosing schools that would lead to successful collaboration.

Although this was the first year of this school's participation in PDS, and accordingly also the first encounter of college staff with this kind of collaboration, we felt that some of the difficulties described in the accompanying research on PDS, such as the slow development of collaboration and the nature of a learning community, were irrelevant to this school.

We attempted to analyse the reasons: did the fact that School C was our first experience of PDS mean that we did not understand its significance, and that what we considered PDS was not actually PDS? Perhaps we drew conclusions from the accompanying study on PDS, whereas in practice the implementation of some of these conclusions contributed to the acceleration of the processes. Or perhaps there was something in this particular school that contributed to the expedition of the processes?

In the wake of a meeting held in college, the first possibility was discarded when, following reports presented by different teams on the progress of PDS in their respective schools, we realised that we did understand and were approaching the task correctly, although, of course, we lacked experience and this could only have slowed down the process.

The accompanied research findings, therefore, helped us understand the difficulties and recommendations in relation to the importance of staff meetings and learning communities and the feelings of the mentor teachers, and helped us to organise differently and focus on the difficulties that emerged from the study.

We felt that there was something special about the school's characteristics that contributed to the acceleration of the PDS processes. As a consequence, we decided to re-examine the factors in and characteristics of School C that speeded up the processes to the satisfaction of all PDS participants and the establishment of effective professional development in the school.

Methodology

We conducted qualitative research involving ongoing comparison and analytical induction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data were gathered through structured questionnaires following content analysis. The questionnaires were distributed among the participants in the learning communities, mentor teachers and student teachers. Categories were constructed by using etic groupings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), derived from Teitel's pyramid and research findings on PDS.

The sample population comprised four mentor teachers (two each from Social Sciences and Computer Sciences) and four student teachers (two each from Social Sciences and Computer Sciences). Before answering the questionnaire, they were shown Figure 1 and were asked whether, in their opinion, any of the four targets of the PDS array in school had been achieved and to what extent.

Findings

Analysis revealed that at the end of the first year, all the targets, including those it had been anticipated would only be achieved after the establishment stage and in later years (according to Teitel), were achieved to various extents.

All the mentor teachers responded that the first target had been achieved in full. One teacher answered, 'staff meetings were held with the mentor teachers and gradually a climate of openness and transparency conducive to cooperation was created', while another added, 'we planned the lessons

together with the student teachers; the entire school system was geared towards the needs of PDS. We were flexible according to the PDS'.

The student teachers also considered that the first target had been achieved in full.

One said:

I feel that the collaboration in school exceeded our wildest expectations. Every opinion and idea could be voiced, and the teachers wanted the students to be partners in the processes predefined as those where they would play active roles. The teachers were willing to listen, to voice opinions, and to give and take. Most were highly committed to the process and I felt that they sincerely accepted me as part of the process. I felt that they were prepared to guide me and to act as responsible partners in our joint activities.

Another responded:

It was great and enriching to feel part of the school staff, and the meetings in the teachers' lounge contributed enormously. The teachers accepted us as part of the team, showed us all their teaching materials, and shared their thoughts and deliberations with us. They seriously considered our suggestions of adapting tests and lesson planning, and the students were satisfied with our help.

A third said

There was a wonderful feeling of cooperation. They talked to us about difficulties that arose; about problems in the class...we established a great relationship where there was openness and trust. I felt that the teachers were doing everything in their power to make us feel part of the professional school team.

One student teacher regarded the school as a role model:

We were lucky enough to be placed in a well-organised school with a moral, formulated educational outlook, with dedicated, professional and involved teachers, and this is the best and most effective way of training teachers.

Another, who had had experience in different schools, said:

They received us well in the classroom and in the teachers' lounge. I got more from my experience here than from other schools.

All the mentor teachers responded that the second target had been achieved. One claimed that the planning process of the PDS had been too rapid and that if it had been longer, the results would have been even better. However, the student teachers considered that the second target had been achieved in full.

One said:

We supervised the students during the breaks, we sat in on staff meetings, and the teachers related to us as equals; the school principal treated us like teachers.

Another stated that although the target had been achieved, the presence of the student teachers in the staff meetings on other days of the week would have been of more value. This was reflected by the fact that not all the information that flowed between the teachers came to the attention of the student teachers:

But we were sometimes not present when information and knowledge was shared among the teachers.

The students felt as if they were partners in the PDS:

We felt that we were part of the school, we were included in the teachers' various activities as if we were qualified teachers and mentors: we taught in class, organised trips, and created a current affairs bulletin board that was updated over the year; we actively participated in the volunteer project, we supervised in the duty roster during school breaks, we supervised during examinations, and we examined students orally and marked their work.

Two mentor teachers responded that the third target had been achieved in full and two that it had been achieved in part. The teachers mentioned that collaboration had occurred in several areas: constructing an on-line lesson; providing guidance in studying methods; organising a joint educational trip; devising tests in cooperation; and arranging specialist lectures for all of the PDS team.

One teacher commented:

We debated in a group (teachers, student teachers and pedagogical subject teachers), deliberated among ourselves, and constructed computer assignments.

The teachers saw the collaboration as an opportunity for professional development and reflection; as one remarked:

The students served as a 'mirror' reflecting my professional image and enabled me to reorganise or to reinforce existing behavior patterns.

In one lesson, before the student teacher began to teach, the mentor teacher addressed the class: *Take advantage of this lesson, because I don't know how to teach through a game like the student teacher.*

One student teacher claimed that the third target had been achieved in full and three that it had been achieved in part. Generally, the students responded that they regarded this target as very important and that they would be pleased if it was achieved fully to enable them to derive untapped possibilities for empowerment in their roles as future teachers.

Three mentor teachers responded that the fourth target was achieved in part and one that it was too early to know whether it had been achieved or not. Those who claimed that the target had been achieved in part explained that the students' learning achievements improved after the student teachers assisted them with research work and tutored them individually.

According to testimony from one mentor teacher, progress started to become discernible in the students' achievements:

Some student teachers personally supported weaker students and in most cases helped them make progress.

Two of the student teachers responded that the fourth target had been achieved in full and two that it had been achieved in part. Like the teachers, the student teachers maintained that tutoring and assistance with research work improved the students' achievements.

Discussion

According to Teitel, Standards 1 and 2, which constitute the basis of PDS collaboration, must be in place in order to establish PDS. Only then can the next step—the establishment of a learning community—occur.

We felt that in School C processes were occurring faster than expected and that while collaboration was becoming established, other steps, which normally occurred at a later stage, were also beginning and were achieving partial success. We examined whether the student teachers and mentor teachers thought that the targets we had classified according to Teitel's model had been achieved and, if so, to what extent. We constructed the learning community according to the research recommendations and the research conducted by Robinson & Darling-Hammond (1994), who indicated that the most important factor contributing to successful collaboration is the mutual interests of all parties.

Most of the meetings in the learning community were devoted to the needs of the mentor teachers and the school. In our opinion, this did not mean ignoring the student teachers' needs, but

rather allowed the latter to become acquainted with authentic issues that would help them as future teachers. Many of the meetings dealt with the joint construction of materials and activities according to the needs of the profession and the school. Since the school's interests lay in the practical, meetings mostly revolved around practical issues. Initially, the objective in the staff meetings was that every component would carry equal weight (Figure 2); we then altered the relative balance of the components in order to match the school's special interests without harming those of the college (Figure 3).

One reason for the mentor teachers' feeling that they had benefited from the collaboration was the stress the staff meetings placed on its practical side: the joint construction of learning materials, on-line days, examinations and various other activities.

The main project was the on-line day, during which students studied on line from home. The groundwork was laid over several months. At the end of one exhausting day of preparation, a subject coordinator the school principal: 'Make sure I have student teachers for the next school year'. A mentor teacher demonstrated her openness, the relationship of trust she had built up with the student teachers, and her readiness to share pedagogical knowledge, when she told them, 'You introduce a lot of variety and color into teaching; I don't know how to teach like that'.

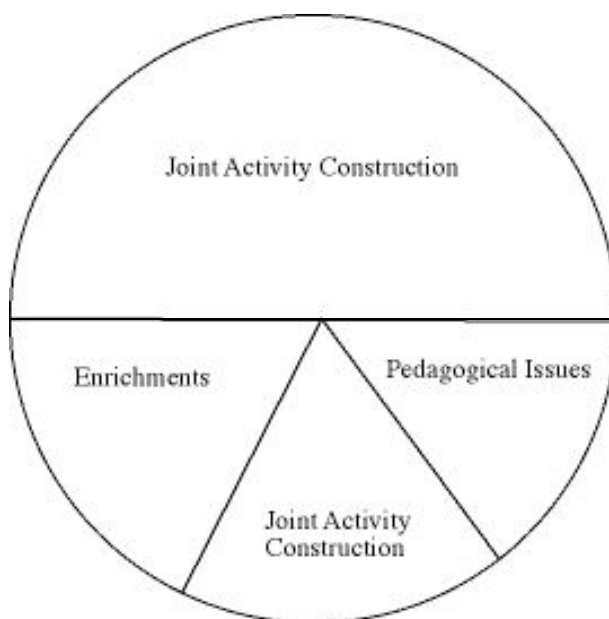


Figure 3: Altered model of staff meeting components

In another project one mentor teacher commented, 'I'll keep this material for next year, because I don't know how to prepare aids like this'.

The staff meetings were conducted in an atmosphere of support, encouragement and reinforcement of the self-confidence that enhances learning significantly.

Factors contributing to success in the first year

At School C, we were able to ascertain the characteristics of a school in which success can almost be guaranteed during the first year of collaboration and we attempted to find the reasons for this, which we believe include:

- an inclination toward mutual learning;
 - a willingness to make fundamental changes whose purpose is enhancing students' learning;
 - a commitment to developing the teachers of the future (teacher training), requiring each teacher to persevere with professional development;
 - the ability to work as a team; and
 - the fostering of a school climate that encourages research, reflection, and constructive criticism.
- (Ariav & Emmanuel, 2003).

Some of the above were confirmed by the findings the mentor teacher and student teacher questionnaires.

Contrary to views expressed in the literature (Ariav & Emmanuel, 2003), in School C the first standard was achieved during the first year of partnership. Analysis of the findings of the questionnaire survey revealed that the student teachers' sense of being partners in the process was more pronounced when school management functioned in a way that was worthy of emulation, and when it respected and trusted its student teachers.

A school climate that includes good teamwork and relations of friendship and respect between all parties is crucial to the project's success and is a significant factor in selecting a school as suitable for collaboration in the PDS model. A school with a good climate will make a favorable impression on outsiders (student teachers and college staff) entering the school environment.

The first prerequisite is the school's management's willingness to enter into a partnership and the conditions it entails, and its motivation to invest in the collaborative system. It is the responsibility of senior school staff to present the school's special interests to all parties clearly and, as far as practicable, explain the benefits to the other participants. In School C, the school staff expected all parties to become involved in school projects (such as on-line activity) and social activities, such as tutoring and providing assistance in research work leading toward matriculation. The interests of the school were practical in nature, rather than ideological, and had quite clearly been implemented during the first year of the collaboration. This, in turn, resulted in the sense of satisfaction felt by the school participants and ultimately the success of the projects.

The mentor teachers were well-qualified academics, which meant they had a high level of self-confidence, their behavior was open, and they were flexible in everything concerning the changes. The special contribution made by the mentor teachers and the processes of trust involved in training the student teachers were reflected in their practical experience and the link between theory and practice (Furlong, 2000).

The ideal mentor teacher must demonstrate flexibility; be open to change; and be prepared to take direct, rather than veiled, criticism.

With respect to the establishment of Teitel's second standard (structures, resources and roles: methods of organisation; and operation of the partnership), Schools A and B began to operate the partnership systematically from the second year of entry into the PDS (Ariav & Emanuel, 2003, 2004), but in School C this had almost been achieved during the first year.

The student teachers must be integrated into the operations of the entire school, from inclusion in the supervisory duty roster to participation in school projects, taking lessons, and providing individual instruction. In traditional teacher training, it is only the student teachers that benefit, whereas in the PDS, teachers and the school also reap the benefits; it is of paramount importance that this occur at the beginning of the first year. One mentor teacher who had voiced concerns over the project at the beginning of the year and been reassured by school management, entered the project with mixed feelings. He later changed his mind about PDS, saying, 'I contributed to the project but I also benefited from it'.

The contribution made by the student teachers must also be significant and advantageous to the school. One of the most obvious benefits that emerged over the first year at School C was the sense of a breath of fresh air and a change in routine in the school as a result of their integration in the PDS. One mentor teacher said, 'The student teachers broke the routine of school and raised a lot of issues for discussion'.

Establishment of Teitel's first step (the seeds of a learning community) was apparent in School C during the first year of the partnership, whereas professional development and a learning community were only established in the other schools in subsequent years. Mentor teachers demonstrated a willingness to share their pedagogical knowledge by verbally reflecting on their work. A professional teacher who is not afraid of consciously entering situations of risk and who reveals a readiness to become involved in teaching activities in order to take advantage of learning opportunities is an essential condition for mentor teacher-student teacher relations (Stanulis & Russel, 2000) and one of the most important factors contributing to the success of teacher training. Not every teacher is capable of saying, 'I was mistaken', and not every teacher is able to stand before a group of student teachers and tell them about mistakes made in class and what contributed to the mistakes, or to errors written in class examinations.

Admitting to such mistakes is of great value in teacher training. The very fact of revealing the mistake, analysing the factors behind it and discussing the conclusions to be drawn for the future are invaluable. Such a teacher is self-confident and prepared to accept assistance from the partnership.

Establishment of Teitel's second step (promoting learning) was, according to the ongoing research conducted on PDS, only reflected in an improvement in learners' achievements in later years. In School C, according to the teachers, some improvement was apparent in the first year of the partnership.

The tutoring of weaker students by student teachers and their assistance in preparing final assignments was significant with respect to achieving the fourth target (enhancing learners' achievements) at School C. The student teachers tutored weaker students on learning materials they found difficult and provided help in preparing research and final matriculation assignments. Both student teachers and students benefited from the tutoring experience.

Most of the difficulties that were encountered in PDS at School C were due to the technical problems that occurred as a result of two different systems (college and school) attempting to function as one unit. The problems surfaced during non-routine activities requiring special coordination between the two sides (for example: activities after school time).

Conclusion and recommendations

In contrast to the opinion of the Council For Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATR) (Maynard & Furlong, 1995), which recommended integrating all schools into the teacher training process, we would argue that only suitable schools should be selected.

The criteria that have proven most successful for selecting a suitable school include willingness and motivation on the part of management to accept the partnership and its conditions; the support of senior school staff who place the partnership high on their list of priorities and who present the school's special interests clearly and as far as practicable from the wider perspective of the other parties; a systematic approach to integrating the student teachers in the school routine; a good school climate, in which both management and teachers provide role models; and the professionalism of the mentor teachers.

We believe that greater emphasis should be placed on meeting the school's special interests; in other words, concentrating on the school's special projects and enhancing students' achievements during the first year of the collaboration while constructing a solid foundation for further progress.

All the above criteria lead to the acceleration of the different steps of the process and the achievement of later Standards more quickly.

In the long term, consideration must be given as to how best to maintain and improve the achievements of the PDS partnership beyond its first year.

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