Gatekeeper or Lynchpin? The Role of the Principal in School-University Partnerships

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ABSTRACT: Teacher education programs are always evolving. To provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to combine pedagogy with practical experience, many programs are developing school-university partnerships. The pairing of pre-service teachers with experienced mentor teachers offers enriched field experience opportunities. The effect of the partnership on mentor teachers, university faculty, and pre-service teachers has been researched, but the role of the principal in the partnership has not been closely examined. Supportive principals provide leadership in many areas within the context of the partnership. Partnerships formed in professional development schools may mature over time, but initially, the tone of the partnership is dependent on the leadership and support of the school administrator. The principal influences placements of candidates, mentor teachers' participation, partnership activities, and the depth of the partnership bond. The contributions of a school administrator principal are incalculable.

NAPDS Essentials Addressed: #2

Background

In the annals of American education, a debate over teacher training practices continues to reemerge. Initially, teachers were considered ready for the classroom or tutoring if they had an education and were willing to share. Later, as young women began to infiltrate the educational system, a passing score on a certification test provided access to the profession (McVey, 1949). Nineteenth century teachers learned to manage students and instruction through observation of their own teachers and through practical experience. At the beginning of the twentieth century, most classroom teachers typically relied on recitation, repetition, and response to teach curriculum (Elam, 2003; Fuller, 1982; Lowth, 1936).

Gradually, each state began to require that all teachers receive formal training (Cuban, 1993). Experienced classroom teachers trained in colleges between teaching semesters and aspiring teachers went to college. When World War II arrived, the critical shortage of trained teachers necessitated the relaxation of requirements (McVey, 1949). Throughout the twentieth century, educational theorists sought to identify and explain how humans learned most effectively (Dewey, 1910; James, 1898/2001; Lillinebrink & Pintrich, 2004; Mayer, 1996; Piaget & Campbell, 1976; Skinner, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978). From progressivism to behaviorism, to cognitivism and then constructivism, instructional practice in teacher training reflected the theorists in vogue.

Dewey (1904) decried an apprenticeship approach for teacher training and maintained that carefully designed experiences would develop reflective practices based on pedagogy. A pre-service teacher (PST) would be placed in a carefully constructed learning environment. Fieldwork through student teaching was considered a final test for fledgling teachers; a time when pedagogy was expected to be integrated into teaching behaviors.

Realizing that pre-service teachers might need more real world experience, droves of students were sent by college faculty into classrooms to observe master teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2005). During the 1980s, states no longer relied on a college diploma as evidence that graduates were ready for the classroom, returning instead to requiring standardized tests of content knowledge and pedagogy to raise the bar on teacher standards (Podgursky, 2005). Due to teacher attrition, many states also designed internship programs for fledgling teachers in order to provide support during the induction year (Huling-Austin, 1986; Tuneburg, 1994). Many first year teachers left the profession because of the reality shock of the exigencies of the classroom (Veenman, 1984). For many, the demands of the classroom were overwhelming and unexpected (Hobson & Ashby, 2012). Internships depended on mentors who provided support, tactic knowledge, and induction into the community of practice. Wenger (1999) defines a community of practice (CoP) as having a domain, community, and the practice. Within the CoP, there should be shared interests and practices unique to the community. The CoP is composed of people who communicate through activities, discussion, and study. The gatekeeper of the CoP controls the flow of information and internships provided new teachers with a mentor to serve as a gatekeeper. Educators examining pre-service training, internships, and teacher retention looked for alternatives to traditional teacher training programs.

As a result, many colleges began using a social constructivist approach to teacher education by helping pre-service teachers to learn by creating a scaffolded learning environment (Le Cornu

& Ewing, 2008). Learning, according to Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist theory, occurs within a detailed social, cultural, and historical setting. A constructivist teaching approach provides authentic learning experiences so that students connect experience with old or new pedagogy (Zurita & Nussbaum, 2007). The interactions of students between previous learning and new pedagogy needed to be supported by experience and social interaction (Applefield, 2000). Airasian and Walsh (1997) confirmed, "people create knowledge from the interaction between their existing knowledge or beliefs and the new ideas or situations they encounter" (p. 445). Colleges were encouraged to provide authentic experiences during fieldwork (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Goodland, 1990). Local schools opened their doors to pre-service teachers as they began to spend more hours in classrooms engaged in authentic tasks.

Even in colleges that embraced a professional development school (PDS) model or partnership, philosophical divisions arose between those that wanted to provide a controlled environment for field experience and those that wanted pre-service teachers to spend more time applying pedagogy under the guidance of an experienced teacher (Edwards & Protheroe, 2004). Critics claimed that extended field time for teacher trainees harked back to the days of guilds and apprenticeships. Extended time would result in the replication of poor teaching skills as trainees modeled and internalized mentor behaviors (Spendlove, Howes, & Wake, 2010).

Proponents of enriched field experiences argued that through the induction of trainees into the CoP, pre-service teachers had time to learn skills in authentic environments under the guidance of skilled teachers, thereby increasing engagement in reflective practice (Strier, 2011). Grisham, Berg, Jacobs, and Mathison (2002) completed a longitudinal study that examined teachers trained through the PDS model. They found that PDS trained teachers were more reflective and involved in continuous learning. These teachers were also more likely to engage in collaboration and willing to take professional risks. They concluded that the effects of the PDS were positive and long lasting.

School-University Partnerships

A variety of school-university partnerships have been established in many parts of the world. Each partnership reflects the social-historical context of the university and community. A traditional partnership may be loosely defined by local schools agreeing to make classrooms available to education students for their field experiences. The classroom time may be spent in strictly observational activities or may provide an authentic environment for students to practice teaching a lesson (Brannon & Fiene, 2013).

There are some unifying elements to all partnerships. In order to be successful, the relationship established between a university and school must be based on trust and mutual respect, with both sides working together value each other (Bosma et al., 2010; Vernon-Dotson, 2012). When these two elements are not present, partnerships fail to thrive, as will partnerships undercut by power struggles, undefined roles, and misunderstandings of the purpose of the partnership (Gray, 2004; Strier, 2011).

Research Question

Investigation into school-university partnerships is generally divided into four areas: the effect of the experience teacher preparation, the effect of the partnership on the local schools and student learning, the structure of the partnership, and the roles of the partners. There are generally roles that are defined and researched: the mentor teacher, the pre-service teacher, and the university faculty. Each of these members' functions differently within the context of the partnership.

The pre-service teacher is the student attending the university with the goal of becoming a professional educator. Pre-service teachers, or trainees, attend classes and are paired with mentor teachers within the partnership school. The quality of the partnership directly affects the trainee. The trainee must balance course requirements assigned by the university with the mentor teacher's expectations and schedule. The messages received by the trainee can be in direct conflict with instructional training at the university (Ledoux & McHenry, 2008). The school-university partnership exists to improve preparation of the pre-service teacher.

The mentor teacher is an experienced teacher who is willing to work with a pre-service teacher for an extended period. The mentor nurtures the student through supportive feedback and reflective discussion. The mentor shares the classroom and provides the student with opportunities to develop classroom skills (Essuman, 2010). The mentor teacher encourages pre-service teacher retention and provides an orientation to the professional culture and responsibilities within the school (Huling-Austin, 1986).

The university faculty partner is responsible for developing the instructional coursework of the student. In some partnerships, the university faculty member may be assigned to the school as a field-based partner. In these situations, the instructor may spend time observing the pre-service teacher, provide support to the mentor teachers, and spend part of the day or week in the school building using it as a teaching lab (Bosma et al., 2010). To the student, the grade issuing faculty member is the most powerful person in the partnership. Partnerships may flounder either because university faculty are not willing to change their instructional approach or because communication of expectations is minimal (Ledoux & McHenry, 2008). A meta-ethnography of 20 case studies conducted by Rice (2002) identified a major stumbling block in 13 of the cases as being the attitudes of university faculty towards a PDS model. The time commitment and the change in program were uncomfortable for many faculty members.

The missing link in the research of partnerships is the role of the school principal. The administrator is often referred to as an 'also there' member. The contributions of the principal to a partnership have rarely been explored. The purpose of this study

is to analyze the role of the principal in a school-university partnership and develop an understanding of the administrator's function within the partnership.

Methodology

The framework for examining the role of four principals in a school-university partnership is based on a qualitative, case study approach. One of the researchers is both informant and participant, having worked with the principals in the school-university partnerships. This dual role provided contextualized data (Mason, 2002).

Yin (2014) states that case studies may investigate a person or a unit of analysis or a phenomenon. In this study, analysis was primarily focused on reflections and interviews of principals involved in school-university partnerships. The interviewer used the same questions (see Appendix) with each principal, but additional questions followed individual principals' responses.

Yin (2014) warns that a case study must be supported by many data sources in order to examine particular phenomena. To support interview data, principals' participation and contributions in various partnership functions were observed and additional data collected from documents supporting the partnership (Creswell, 2014). These documents include committee- meeting notes, advisory board notes, mentor training agendas and power points, professional learning community study books, a Professional Partnership Network (PPN) white paper, student work, and contact logs. The contexts of the interviews and events were an interpretive tool used to extract understanding from the interviews and supporting documents. (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln, 2000; Mason, 2002).

The collected data were analyzed for emergent themes and commonalities through the use of key words and ideas foundational to the interviews. Initially, the major themes were: Involvement, Management, Professional Development, and Evaluation. Sorted by these topics and coded by themes, the interview data were placed in a matrix to determine frequency and depth. Document data were coded in the same way and used to establish findings (Creswell, 2014).

Professional Partnership Network

The school-university partnership in the case study began with two elementary schools in a district already hosting a large number of pre-service teachers. The Professional Partnership Network (PPN) was a pilot partnership program between a regional university in a rural, Appalachian community and the local school district. Elementary and special education pre-service teachers are recruited during their sophomore year to join the PPN. There are no requirements to join the PPN. Pre-service teachers agree to learn alongside a variety of mentor teachers for three semesters before student teaching.

Each semester the amount of time the trainee spent in the classroom was increased (See Table 1). The scaffolded semesters were designed to increase in time, instructional practices, and responsibility. Trainees, placed with a new mentor each semester, rotated between grade levels and schools. During the final semester of the PPN, students returned to the university campus at the start of the district school year, starting the year alongside the mentor teacher. The mentor teacher allowed the student to fulfill university course requirements by teaching lessons in the classroom, but the mentors also monitored skill progress, allowing trainees to take on more responsibility as they were ready.

The school district has four elementary schools (See Table 2). The first two schools involved in the PPN were the largest and smallest in the county. School A, the largest school, has over 550 students in grades Kindergarten through 5th grade. The school has 23 teachers and three special education teachers. School B is the small school, with just over 200 students in K-5th grade. There are eight teachers and one special education teacher. The school has over 75% free and reduced lunch students. During the initial years, these two schools piloted professional development school programs with university faculty.

As the program gained momentum among pre-service teachers, the need for mentor teachers grew. School C joined the PPN program. School C has 286 students in grades K-5th. This Title I school has an 80% free and reduced rate. The school has 15.5 teachers.

One school principal choose not to take part in the program. Instead, this school continued to host the pre-service teachers in the traditional track. These students complete 200 hours of field experience before student teaching. Upon the retirement of the administrator, the new principal, Principal D, requested involvement in the PPN. School D has 445 students and a free and reduced percentage of 72%. The school has 23 classroom and special education teachers. All of the schools share one gifted and talented teacher and schools A and B and schools C and D share art, music, and PE teachers. The ethnicity rate for the district is 5.9%. The four elementary schools have a less than a 1% diversity rate in each school.

The years of school involvement in the partnership range from six to one. School A and B both have been part of the PPN for six years. A university coordinator worked with the principals and faculty from the university and Schools A and B to develop the program. While Principal A has remained part of the PPN since its inception, School B has had three principals, two of whom inherited the program. Due to the longevity in the PPN, Principal A has become a district-wide principal leader. This additional role is one of communication and information dissemination. Principal A has also taken on the role of mentor by supporting principals as they become involved in the PPN.

Administration of the PPN

A university coordinator manages the PPN as well as spending one day a week visiting mentor teachers and students in each of the schools. Committees composed of university faculty,

Table 1. PPN Field Experience

	Converse	Diverse	Immerse	Student Teaching
Purpose	Begin to talk and think as an educator Reflective practice Critical Thinking Acclimate to school environment Oral and written grammar	Explore Diversity by working with Special Education, Gifted, and ELL students Develop understanding of the roles of the school community both in and out of the building	Develop instructional, management, and assessment skills through a sustained relationship with students and mentor	Demonstrate competence in teacher standards
Activities	Tutoring Limited small group teaching	Classroom Management tasks Co-teach lessons Tutor Transitional Activities	Conduct Action Research Project with Mentor Co-Teach or teach lessons and units Assessment and data analysis Participate in Professional Learning Communities within the school Work alongside teacher as a partner	Create and teach a unit Co-teach lessons Implement professional growth plan Teach a variety of lessons Manage the classroom
Time with mentor in classroom	Twice a week for 2 hours all semester 64 hours	One full day and an additional 4 hours each week all semester 192 hours	Begin the school year with the teacher and class, full time for two weeks. Three full days a week when classes start at the University 464 Hours	Two 8-week sessions split between two classroom teachers. PPN students may choose to complete one session with their mentor teacher. 640 Hours

teachers, administrators, and pre-service teachers meet each semester to discuss progress and make decisions concerning student evaluations, communication issues, program changes, and mentor teacher criteria. Committees also review program alignment towards NCATE PDS school standards. In addition, university faculty members and experienced mentor teachers meet to plan and implement required mentor training. Mentor teachers are required to apply every semester.

An advisory board, composed of one pre-service teacher, a faculty member, the PPN coordinator, a department chair, and assistant dean from the university, meets twice a semester with a school board administrator, the principal leader, a parent, and a teacher-leader from each school. The board reviews committee work and develops policies and standards. This board plans to meet less often as the partnership formalizes.

Findings

Through discussions with school-university partnership principals, examination of documents gathered over the six years of the partnership, and interview responses, the role of a principal active in a school-university partnership appears to move through a developmental cycle that evolves over time (See Figure 1). The cycle begins with interest and enthusiasm and leads to professional commitment. The final stage is recruit and mentor. All of the principals in the study were somewhere in this cycle.

Table 2. Contextual Information of Schools

School	*Number of Students*	*% Free and Reduced Student*	*Teachers*	*Principal's Years of Experience*	*Years School in PPN*	*Years Principal Involved in PPN*
A	550	51%	26	11	6	6
B	200	75%	9	1	6	1
C	286	80%	15.5	14	3	3
D	445	72%	23	1	1	1

Figure 1. Active Principal Involvement in School-University Partnerships

Interest and Enthusiasm

The school principal is the conduit through which school-university partnerships are begun. In each school, the principal has chosen to become part of the partnership. In School B, the initial principal worked with the university faculty and Principal A to create a program. While the two subsequent principals inherited the partnerships, they were free to withdraw. Instead, both chose to continue with the partnership. They opened their classrooms to the pre-service teachers.

Both Principal C and D asked to become a partnership school, with interested teachers, invited by Principal C, considered serving as mentors. The principal hosted an informational meeting between university faculty and teachers to discuss partnering with the university. While not all the teachers at School C chose to become mentors, Principal C established a partnership and encouraged teachers to become mentors. During the initial partnership years, the principal at school D was not interested in being a partnership school. When the administrator retired, the new administrator, Principal D, was enthusiastic about becoming a part of the PPN, saying,

> Before I was a principal here, when I was teaching, my school [School C] had PPN students and I knew how much help they were. When I came here, the teachers asked if we could have PPN students. We were ready.

Professional Commitment

Commitment to the partnership comes when enthusiasm wanes. During this stage, each principal modeled professional dispositions to the pre-service teachers and mentors. It is hard to separate interest and enthusiasm from professional commitment because they flow together, but professional commitment goes beyond agreeing to allow trainees in the school. The ways in which the pre-service teachers are treated and mentored reflects the principal's commitment. Principal A explained,

> We treat them [the PPN students] as our own. If I buy my teachers a book for a PLC [professional learning community], I get one for my PPN students. If I buy a tee-shirt for my teachers, they get one, too. When I do a walk-through and they [PPN students] are teaching, I observe them and give them feedback the same as I do my teachers. They are part of our school.

Each semester, the school coordinator meets with each principal to assign mentor teachers to PPN students for the next semester. Principals must know the strengths and weakness of their teachers. One aspect of partnerships is to make sure students and mentors are matched in ways that strengthen the trainees' skills. The principal and coordinator discuss students' needs and teachers' strengths. Some students who are too rigid may be placed with a less structured mentor. A student who is weak in math or classroom management would be matched with a mentor who is strong in those areas. The matching of students to mentors is an important aspect of successful mentoring.

Mentor teachers must apply. The principals assess applications using a rubric created by a partnership committee. Although the rubric provides general information, it does not evaluate the mentoring strengths of the teacher. Years of teaching experience is not enough to insure mentoring skills. The teacher must have a nurturing attitude toward the trainee. Many good teachers are not willing to share their classrooms with pre-service teachers. In the end, the principals regulate trainee placements by working with the university coordinator. They use their expertise and knowledge of school faculty to place PPN students into mentor partnerships. In a very real sense, the principal may not be providing direct communication as a gatekeeper, but the principal does decide which faculty members will directly and consistently communicate with the trainees.

This informational control is essential to the pre-service teacher's professional growth. Teachers, unhappy with their profession or the administration, have shared this frustration with trainees. While this does not often happen, during conferences with university faculty or administrators, the pre-service teachers have shared how the apathetic or negative attitudes affected their own outlook on the teaching profession. Through judicious mentor selection, principals create a positive learning environment for university students. The original principal at school B once reflected on a teacher's mentor application,

> I won't place any more students with [the teacher] since she will only use her as an aide and not mentor her. If she [the student] was a sorority type or very good looking, she would give her a great deal of attention. Since the PPN student is not, she [the teacher] won't give her the time of day.

When it came time to look at mentor teacher applications, Principal D examined one and asked,

> Does everyone who applies have to be a mentor? I have observed this teacher and I know that she would not be a good mentor. She wants one who will do busy work for her, but that is all.

With the principals scrupulously ensuring that only their best, nurturing, and skilled teachers are serving as mentors, they are controlling the learning environment of the pre-service teachers.

The school-university partnership does not have a budget. The principals reported that while a great deal of verbal support was provided by the school board office, there was very little financial support for the partnership. The financial support from the university was also minimal. Stretching the budget has been the norm. Principal A revealed the financial support the school provides for the benefit the trainees, "Book clubs, budget expenses at times, gifts for PPN students, the banquet, etc. [We provide] professional development to PPN students within the school setting with our staff."

While financial incentives for teachers are not routinely provided, there have been attempts. Principal A shared,

> Once semester I was able to have a pass to the wellness center [at the university] which was some compensation from [the university] the year [the Dean] was able to get that for me, but it only happened one semester.

The principals made it clear that financial incentives were not the reason they encouraged their teachers to be involved in the partnership. The principals discussed how the partnership made them grow as administrators. Principal A explained,

> It [the partnership] has helped me see students and prospective teachers in a variety of ways. I feel it has helped me become a better mentor by seeing a variety of needs that students and teachers have.

Each of the principals made the partnership a priority within the school. The principals attended the partnership committee and evaluation meetings. Each of these principals participated in the mentor training and committee meetings. The principals demonstrated their commitment to the partnership by allocating their time to support the partnership. Principals host partnership meetings and help lead discussions. Principal A shared,

> It is some work, but I feel it is a benefit to our school and district to have the program, to have a good working relationship with the other school principals, and faculty [at the university]. . .So with that said, I feel my time is well spent to benefit the program.

The amount of time principals devote to partnerships varies on the number of years the partnership has been in existence. Principal A, who has participated in the partnership the longest, spends five to 10 hours each month working with partnership members. In contrast, Principal D reports meeting once or twice a month to provide support. The difference in time is due in part because School D is in its initial stages of mentoring. The longer a principal is involved in a partnership, the more time is devoted to the partnership. Even though School B has been part of the PPN since its inception, the new principal in School B spends the same amount of time as Principal D. While it might be argued that these principals devote less time because they are new principals, Principal C had 11 years of experience when the school became a partner with the university. The time commitment of Principal C has risen each year.

One reason for the gradual increase is the structure of the program. The three stages: converse, diverse, and immerse each have a different level of field time attached and both mentors and trainees move through the stages. As the mentor teachers become more experienced, the principal works more closely with members of the partnership. The more time the trainees spend in the school, the greater the involvement of the principals. Because they have had the most experience, Principals A and C have both observed trainees while they taught, held impromptu lessons with trainees, and provided emotional support to trainees during times of stress.

Not every university student who dreams of being a teacher has either the skills or the dispositions for the profession. Principal A has championed the partnership program precisely because it supports both strong and weak pre-service teachers as they learn professional skills. Trainees have needed extra support in everything from instructional skills to classroom management. Principals A and C (as well as the former principals at School B) have helped draft student remediation plans and been involved in both the implementation and monitoring phases.

The school-university partnership depends on school faculty expertise. The experienced principals have arranged for teachers to be released from their classrooms to co-teach lessons with university faculty on everything from classroom instruction to assessment. Principals A and C both provided direct instruction to the trainees in special education policies and behavior management. All four principals encourage the PPN students to participate in Professional Learning Communities within the schools and have arranged tours of students' neighborhoods so the pre-service teachers would have an understanding of the socio-economic diversity within the school.

One criticism of school-university partnerships is that schools districts will see them as a training ground for the potential new hires. However, the trainees are being inducted into a community of practice of teaching, not the school. This is an important distinction. Most pre- service teachers in the rural area return to their hometowns to teach. Instead, principals A and C have reported that their teachers discuss how they have improved their own practice because they are modeling skills for the university students. While both principals have interviewed the trainees for teaching positions,

most do not accept positions with the school system. Principal C revealed,

> It is kind of sad to see them graduate. When they [PPN students] first came to us, they were unsure of themselves. We have watched them grow and they are like our babies. I know we will have other PPN students, but this group will always have a special place in our hearts because they were the first ones we ever had and we learned with them.

Recruit and Mentor

As principals expanded their role in the school-university partnership from interest and excitement to professional commitment, they eventually progressed to recruiting and mentoring. This stage occurs as the benefits of the partnership become apparent. The principals encourage partnership expansion into other schools. Principal A reflected on the level of involvement and reasons for encouraging other principals to become part of the partnership,

> I am more aware of the changes and the support students need. [I have learned] how to work with colleagues outside of the building, I have been immersed from the beginning which has helped me see the progress over time. Partnerships can falter or end when the partnership becomes dependent on individuals.

Upon the promotion of the initial principal at School B, the PPN partnerships could very well have failed in that school. The sustainability of the program was supported by its structure. During the first year, the Teacher Leader at school B helped the new principal pair students with mentors. Principal A recruited School C to become part of the partnership. In addition, School Principal A mentored new principals into the program. While this was not an assigned role, Principal A undertook the role of mentor within the district and developed the role to include supporting new principals. Principal C explained,

> There was never a time I didn't want our school to participate. [Principal A] shared the benefits. Also, I hired [a graduate of the program] and saw how knowledgeable she was from being a PPN.

When School C asked to join the PPN, Principal A made a point to communicate regularly with the new administrator. In this way, the expectations of the program were clarified and reinforced. Principal A made sure that Principal C really understood how to oversee the program, participate in activities, and how to work with the trainees and mentors. Principal A would often call Principal C to explain certain tasks or issues with the program. Principal A also mentored the new principals at School B. This mentoring process strengthened the partnerships. The community of practice surrounding the PPN strengthened and grew due to the orientation Principal A provided to new principals.

With two new principals becoming involved in the school-university partnership, both Principal A and C provided advice and assistance to them. They answer questions concerning expectations and provide leadership. As new university faculty became part of the PPN, Principals A and C clarified their expectations of the collaboration. This strengthened the partnership in all the schools.

One perceived positive aspect of the partnership was closer relationship between the school and the university. Principal A claimed, "One benefit is the collaboration with faculty at [the university] is improving within the school. I look for this to be more embedded and successful as time goes on." Additionally, Principal D explained that the partnership, ". . . . Opens and develops new communications through the university. . . . It creates an opportunity to develop our relationship with the university."

The collaborative feature of the school-university partnership is one that can sustain and strengthen the partnership. Building enduring relationships between the university and school depends on trust and mutual respect. By modeling a collegial attitude with university faculty, the principal encourages the teachers to trust the professional relationship. Like any friendship, relationship building takes time, commitment, and opportunities for shared communication.

As a thank you to the mentors for their hard work, the partnership leaders plan a Spring Fling dinner each year. Graduating seniors are sent forth with a commissioning ceremony. The trainees entering their immersed semester meet their mentor teachers while the new inductees help serve the dinner. The school board, university, and principals contribute money for the meal and door prizes. The principals work to help organize this event with the advisory board. They realize the need to recognize the many contributions of the mentor teachers and make every effort to support the event. The experienced principals used this event as an opportunity to tutor the new principals in their role.

Another aspect of the mentoring is the counseling that occurs after graduation. The experienced principals and mentors continue to provide assistance to the new teachers. Both Principals A and C know where their former trainees have been hired. They have provided advice and encouragement to the young teachers beginning their careers. When one beginning teacher, working in another county, was involved in a serious car accident, Principal A led the school in providing support. As young teachers applied to graduate schools, this principal offered advice. Principal C also keeps in contact with graduates as they leave the community and begin their careers. The partnership is extended beyond the confines of the district.

Implications

At any point along the way, the school-university partnership can be derailed. Although the contributions of the school principal are often unnoticed or disregarded, they are essential to a successful partnership. The principal controls access to the school and induction into the CoP of the profession.

Moving through the cycle of interest and excitement, the principal establishes the criteria for the participating mentors within the partnership, the level of collaboration between the school and university, and controls access to the classroom. Principals express their professional commitment to the partnership through their active participation. Based on our research, productive and dynamic school-university partnerships depend on principals who act as lynchpins to the partnership. They are essential to successful partnerships. In school-university partnerships, the principal provides leadership in these areas:

1. Communication Networks
2. Professional boundaries
3. Model Partnership Dispositions
4. Nurture Relationships

Principals establish the professional boundaries of a partnership through their leadership. When the principal supports the partnership, it becomes a priority. Principals observe mentors and provide support for remediation. They use their expertise to determine allocation of resources.

As principals become more experienced in the partnership, they enter the recruit and mentor stage. The principal's commitment to the partnership grows beyond their schoolyard. The principal encourages and mentors new members to the partnership. As trainees graduate, the principal continues to nurture the new teachers. Successful partnerships should structure partnership mentoring among school leaders.

Future Research

The role of the principal in school-university partnerships has not been well documented. Often dismissed as an extra in the partnership, this research study explored the many areas in which the principal supports pre-service teacher education through school-university partnerships. Vital partnerships hinge on active school administrators. They should not be thought of as someone who 'also attended' the partnership. The principal is the lynchpin of the partnership. The principals determine which gatekeepers will induct pre-service teachers into the CoP.

While it is true that the principals in this study have gone through three stages, it is very possible for principals to decide to withdraw from a partnership at any point. Research into failed partnerships should be conducted to determine significant factors. Further research into the role of the principal in school-university partnerships should be undertaken to develop a clearer understanding of what school administrators can bring to the partnership. Understanding and honoring the contributions of the school administrator to a partnership may help establish sustainable partnerships. SUP

Appendix

Interview Questions

I. Background information and preparation

1. Reason for becoming a principal
2. Describe the principal preparation training received

II. Contextual factors

1. How many years have you worked with the Professional Partnership Network (PPN)?
2. How many pre-service teachers does your school mentor in the PPN each year?

III. Level of Involvement with the Professional Partnership Network

1. Did you choose to be part of the PPN? If not, how did you become involved?
2. How do you view your role in the PPN? 3. How has your role changed over time?

IV. Management

1. How much time do you spend each year working with PPN students, Mentors, or MSU Faculty?
2. What resources do you need or have had to gather to implement and run this partnership?
3. Is there support for the program from your district? (Verbal, financial, other?)
4. What other support do you need for the program? Where would that support come from? (The district? The University? Other?)
5. Are there any issues that have arisen that you did not expect? 6. When issues arise, how are they addressed? Are the university faculty accessible?

V. Professional Development

1. What Professional Development (PD) was provided for your role with the PPN?
2. What PD do you feel you need?
3. What about personal development? (Books, Lectures, Advanced study?)
4. How much training do your mentor teachers receive?
5. Is this enough?
6. What input do you have in the mentor training?

VI. Evaluation

1. How and when does evaluation of the program in your school take place?

2. Is it formal or informal?
3. Explain the process (There may not be one)
4. Did the evaluation process reveal any unexpected results?
5. How does participation in the PPN impact the students in your school?
6. Has your relationship with University faculty changed? In what way?
7. What is the impact of the PPN on the teachers' skills in your school?
8. Have you noticed/documented a change?
9. What have you discovered that you wish you had known at the beginning of the Program?

VII. Anything else you would like to add about being a Principal in the PPN?

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