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## Teacher Education Partnerships: An Australian Research-Based Perspective

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*Abstract: This article reviews literature about partnerships between teacher education faculties and schools that indicates not just heightened interest in recent years, but also significant progress. Despite interest and progress, conceptual and practical difficulties remain in establishing, developing, nurturing and implementing successful partnerships so that core interests of partners are satisfied. Against this background, the article examines the experiences of an Australian teacher education faculty that sought to enhance its arrangements with local schools by reorganizing and staging a teacher education program through a community of practice. Data drawn from a study of the emergent partnership confirm the trends in the literature and provide additional information about what appear to be essential partnership elements. The article concludes with speculative remarks about the trends in the literature and the study findings that may frame future research directions.*

The teacher education literature is rich with findings about the problematic nature of partnering with schools to deliver teacher education programs (see for example; Lynch, 2012; Moran, et al, 2009; Fullan, 2007; Smith and Lynch, 2006; Moss, 2008; Vick, 2006; Cochran-Smith and Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005; Furlong et al, 2000; Smith, 2000). As Spendlove, Howes & Wake (2010, p. 67) note, “Generally a polarised view exists where school experience focuses trainees very much on day-today pragmatics of working in school classrooms while staff in HEIs attempt to provide the theoretical basis to underpin and interpret these school-based activities”.

This kind of situation is prevalent, indeed conventional, in the Australian context where most university / school-based teacher education arrangements today are primarily managed by a university ‘teacher education faculty’ (TEF). The schools in this model are recipients of already digested policies and procedures that, at the local school level, have token validation by committees consisting of academic and school staff. Teacher education accreditation agencies provide the authority for such arrangements through the tiers of compliance procedures now required by governments at both state and national levels. The management of teacher education programs, the maintenance of the ‘school-university relationship’ and the organisational logistics fall to the university alone (Lynch, 2012; Moran, et al, 2009; Fullan, 2007; Smith & Lynch, 2006; Furlong et al, 2000). A predictable effect of the one-sided nature of such arrangements and the work involved for classroom teachers in them (see O’Keeffe, 2011; Smith & Lynch, 2010; Hood, 2010; Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, 2007) is that schools are sometimes reluctant to volunteer participation for in-school teacher education student supervision. Australian teacher educators and their peak bodies report that finding student ‘placements’ has become a challenge as competition between institutions for fewer places

increases. Concomitantly, there is enhanced pressure on institutions to ensure that 'having a student teacher' creates minimal disruption and inconvenience to the classroom teacher (Moran, et al, p. 952), thus reinforcing the "the pragmatics of 'teaching and implementation of national policies rather than those aspects of pedagogy, reflection and critical analysis' traditionally encouraged" by universities (Spendlove, Howes & Wake, 2010, p. 66). In these circumstances, the concept of 'partnership' is stretched to breaking point.

In what follows, we recount the experiences of an Australian teacher education faculty (TEF) that sought to enhance their arrangements with local schools by reorganizing and staging their teacher education program through a 'community of practice'. The story is strategically interesting because the new arrangements operated side by side with the pre-existing Bachelor of Education program (B.Ed), thus allowing for comparisons to be made. To this end, the article also reports the outcomes of a study into the new arrangements. To achieve this goal the pre-existing BEd program and its successor, the 'new program', are first outlined for points of reference.

### **Teacher Education Partnerships**

A review of the literature into differing approaches to teacher education partnerships (for example, Moran, et al, 2009; Moss, 2008; Fullan, 2007; Peters, 2002; White, et al; Grundy, et al, 2001 ) reveals a variety of approaches, all of which, according to Wong and Chuan (2002) have "shortcomings... in the areas of residencies or clinical training in schools". More specifically these shortcomings are manifest in the differing understandings and expectations of 'partnership' that are held by the teacher education faculty and participating schools (White, et al, 2010; Peters, 2002; Smith, 2000). The term 'partnership' appears to be used as if there is consensus on its meaning and that it is a 'good thing' to have. Nevertheless, as a general comment, 'partnership' as it is increasingly used in teacher education can be described as a 'shell' word (Watson, 2004, p. 1) rather than a readily understood concept with procedures and outcomes attached to it.

According to Moss (2008, p. 347), the more challenging issues are in the "legitimacy of the relationship between the university and the partner, how they become established and continued and the impact of these experiences". Despite these difficulties for teacher educators and schools, student teachers "commonly perceive their experience in schools as the most valuable part of their teacher education" (White, et al, 2010, p. 183).

On another front "the past decade has been dominated by concerns associated with issues of quality, and in particular, ways in which quality learning outcomes can be produced, measured and assured" (White, et al, 2010, p.181). This means that schools are focused to seek 'relationships' with a TEF that contributes to the outcomes of the school as well as preparing new teachers on behalf of the TEF.

Our view of partnership, like that of Grundy et al. (2001), has a conscious, substantive edge to it. It refers to a relationship in which there is mutual cooperation and responsibility between individuals, namely persons and organisations, or groups for the achievement of a specified goal.

The 'specified goal' is the element that distinguishes this view of partnership. In our view, the generic goal is graduating exceptionally well-prepared teachers for the 21st Century, while concurrently, furthering the capabilities of existing schoolteachers in an era of change. The specifications of this goal and its implementation are realised in a set of principles, procedures and processes that the partners agree to activate and sustain. Importantly, the agreements include shared resource allocation and accountability measures

that apply to both the TEF and schools (See House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> July Noosa, EVT 3 for a discussion of “partnership” at Noosa). The resource pool is therefore thought about and mobilised as the aggregate of TEF and School/employer resources that are placed in the control of the partnership for the purpose of achieving the overarching goal.

In summary then, our concern for teacher education ‘partnerships’ is to create a model that engages and includes all of the parties involved in the exercise. It follows that the key producers, orchestrators, brokers, disseminators and users are drawn from the TEF, schools, teachers, employers, local government, unions, and anyone else with an interest in teacher education in a given region. These parties come together voluntarily with the intention of launching a joint strategy to prepare teachers and to contribute to the ongoing professional development of the teaching profession. In this sense, the idea of ‘partnership’ goes beyond an earnest but loose association between a local university and schools because it disrupts the *status quo* by repositioning partnership members to deal with producing teachers for the knowledge society.

A partnership format with such attributes extinguishes some of the important concerns in the partnership literature such as the tension between TEF theoretical aspirations and the practicality of the classroom or placement of student teachers. In the partnership concept noted here, such issues are thrashed out in advance of implementation so that the main concern of the partnership becomes effective implementation for which everyone has responsibility. This is not to say that such a model is entirely successful (see Allen, 2009 and Doe, 2011 for example), but it does offer a way to solve what have often seemed to be intractable problems in the relationships between TEFs and schools. Such problems are shown to be effects of the conventional BEd model.

### **The Pre-existing Bachelor of Ed Partnership**

The partnership arrangement in the pre-existing BEd program at the time reflected the previously outlined criticisms of teacher education and is best described as a “practicum service agreement”. In this arrangement the demarcation lines, operating policies, roles and responsibilities, procedures and fee structure for services rendered by schools, teachers and employees were detailed. The logistics of the agreement were captured in a “practicum handbook”, which set out requirements for schools and student teachers (Furlong et al, 2000; Korthagen, 2001; Tom, 1997). Each participating school agreed to host a number of student teachers for ‘the practicum’ under the direction of the TEF and according to the practicum booklet. The student teacher was judged capable according to their ability to fit the predefined handbook tasks and activities (Furlong, et al., 2000; Korthagen, 2001; Tom, 1997). Communication between the TEF and the schools was limited to technical matters outlined in practicum handbook in ways that reinforced a practicality ethos, while the overall approach lay in programs developed by the teacher education faculty. For providing a service, teachers received a token payment according to the pre-arranged state-wide industrial agreement covering such work.

In this arrangement, the work of the TEF and that of the host school is considered to be different yet complementary to the global outcomes of the teacher education program. Commentators argue that such service arrangements result in a mismatch between the on-campus work provided by the TEF and that of professional activity as constituted by the school (see Spendlove, Howes & Wake, 2011; Barone, et al, 1996; Emihovich, 1999; Ramsey, 2000; Smith, 2000; Tom, 1997). The model compels the student teacher to balance obligations to the TEF and its requirements with those of the classroom culture of the

assigned supervisor (Korthagen, 2001). Depending on one's perspective, the consequence of the mismatch is a lack of coherence and integration for the student teacher, who inadvertently, or has little choice but to become activity engaged in learning and implementing a 'survival' strategy.

Such differences occur because the TEF operates according to three rationalities. First, the TEF falsely assumes student teachers will be able to automatically translate their theoretical coursework into actionable sequences once they are in a classroom situation. Second, the TEF, because of its different culture, priorities, reward systems and agendas, develops programs in isolation from the needs of industry. And third, the critical matter of pedagogical practice ---teaching ---- is left to the school and the individual supervisor, thus ensuring that for the most part, the TEF intervention in developing a student teacher's teaching expertise is at best muted and at worst hindered. This set of consequential relationships and arrangements has the effect of reducing the capability of graduate teachers and by association, diminishes the TEF's relevance to both student teacher and the participating school (Smith, 2000).

The circumstances of the pre-existing BEd program, together with the then State government education policy initiatives, and the enormous theoretical literature about the emergence of a knowledge-based economy at the time, motivated the architects of the "new" program to rethink the pre-existing BEd program. The partnership arrangement, given it was an increasing source of negative feedback to the TEF, came into sharp focus and became a key area of interest in the revised, 'new program'.

### **The 'New Program' Partnership**

As the 'new program' architects were working on the nature of a partnership arrangement, they found support in the work of analysts such as Valli and Renner-Ariev (2000) and Harper and Sadler (2002) and in the business world's attempts to bridge 'theory and practice'. There were strong arguments that 'partnerships' created powerful structures to support change in the mindsets and operations of all parties. It was clear at the practical, everyday conversational level and in the theoretical literature that such structures opened up the possibility of symbiotic reform of the BEd program mindset and the on-going professional development of school-based participants. The planners then grappled with how such a partnership could be initiated, fostered and sustained for definite agreed goals and what the respective roles should be for the TEF, employers and schools (Lynch, 2012, Smith & Lynch, 2006). Before proceeding, we briefly describe the new program.

Furlong et al., (2000) and Tom (1997) describe a successful teacher education partnership built on collaboration in which, according to Smith (2000), teacher education is no longer a university problem but a joint industry (schooling) and university responsibility. At the heart of this model, Furlong et al., (2000, p. 8) states:

“is the commitment to develop a preparation program where students are exposed to different forms of educational knowledge, some of which come from school, some of which come from higher education or elsewhere. In such a model the (school) teachers are seen as having equally legitimate, but perhaps different bodies of knowledge to those of the university”.

Underpinning Furlong et al.'s. (2000), Tom (1997) and Smith's (2000) notion of successful partnerships is what might be called 'communities of practice'. Wenger (1998) defines a community of practice as a group of people who are brought together by joining in common activities and by what they have learned through their mutual engagement in these activities. In this respect, Wenger and Lave (2003) consider a community of practice to be

different from a 'community of interest' or a 'geographical community' because it involves a shared practice. According to Wenger (1998, cited in Wenger & Lave, 2003) a community of practice is defined by three dimensions:

- What it is about: its joint enterprise as understood and continually renegotiated by its members.
- How it functions: mutual engagement that binds members together into a social entity.
- What capability it has produced: the shared repertoire of communal resources (routines, sensibilities, artefacts, vocabulary, styles, etc.) that members have developed over time.

These communities of practice are evident everywhere that people come together to do things with an end in view (Henschel, 2001). Teaching in a school or in a faculty, administering, doing medical work or nursing can all be described as 'communities of practice'. These arrangements, which are, to a large extent, post-postmodern phenomena, share the capacity to create and use organizational and other knowledge through informal and formal learning and mutual engagement (Adams, 2000). A community of practice "involves more than the technical knowledge or skill associated with undertaking some task" (Allen et al 2010; Wenger & Lave, 2003). It involves members in a set of relationships where they are doing things organised around some particular interest that matters to them (Wenger, 1998). This situation develops in members a sense of joint enterprise and identity and in turn leads to an ongoing commitment to change (Wenger & Lave, 2003). According to Wenger and Lave (2003):

A community of practice needs to generate and appropriate a shared repertoire of ideas, commitments and memories. It also needs to develop various resources such as tools, documents, routines, vocabulary and symbols that in some way carry the accumulated knowledge of the community. In other words, it involves practice: ways of doing and approaching things that are shared to some significant extent among members

Communities of practice are central to any understanding of the complex knowledge challenges faced by many organizations in today's Knowledge Economy. They assume importance because they enable commitment to change and the generation and sharing of repertoires of ideas and skills required for operations in a Knowledge Economy (Adams, 2000; Wenger & Lave, 2003). Such understandings motivate recognition of the importance of knowledge generated by communities of practice within an organization such as a school or a TEF or as a community of practice made up of the student teacher, the teacher education faculty and a school. Once the existence and importance of knowledge communities are recognized, the task for the agencies involved in the preparation of student teachers who enter these communities, is to identify how the communities might engage in common work practices and to foster belonging (Adams, 2000; Henschel, 2001). The engagement is, in effect, a knowledge strategy for preparing new recruits.

This knowledge strategy means a transformation of how and why things are done by each of the contributing partners or in the adjacent communities of practice rather than a re-ordering of existing pieces. For example the community of practice communities (the set of sets) is where new connections are forged, where new relationships and networks are legitimised as a place for creating and sharing knowledge about improving what is and moving to visions of the future and, in turn, creating new capabilities (Graham & Smith, 2007; Stephenson, 1999).

Theoretically, the concept of communities of practice provides a mechanism for generating new relationships and networks that legitimate the creation and sharing of knowledge about reform (Adams, 2000; Henschel, 2001). This is one element of a complex social dynamic as Nowotny, Scott & Gibbons (2001) argue. Their position is that while institutions, policies and individuals seek to maintain demarcations between such things as

‘government’ schools and ‘public’ universities, the prevailing pressures and directions are towards closer, more interactive relationships. In turn, the increasing reactions and communications between let us say schools and TEFs indicate a deeper transformation in how institutions relate to one another, what they refer to as context-sensitive, co-evolution that requires a complete re-thinking of the basis of such relationships.

Accordingly, the negotiated partnership as described was the preferred organisational arrangement strategy for tackling the challenges faced by the participating schools and the TEF in their joint efforts to deal with the Knowledge Economy. Within that model, a fundamental aspect is the community of practice that utilizes Stephenson’s (1999) learner mediated partnerships.

Stephenson (1999) cites trends in the United Kingdom where a community of practice, known as a “learner-mediated partnership”, increases both student and the organisational capability. In the teacher education setting, the university provides program leadership, specialist learning modules and associated supervision and access to accreditation. The student teacher has the opportunity to make inputs into the program while the school provides opportunities to learn through real-life work with access to resources, mentors, contextualising programs and mentoring (Stephenson, 1999; Wenger & Lave, 2003). This arrangement requires all parties to embrace mutual concern for values, flexibility, openness, responsibility and continuous learning (Stephenson, 1999).

In the ‘learner-mediated partnership’, learning tasks are based on the pursuit of real-time projects formulated collaboratively by the student, the school and TEF (Stephenson, 1999). In this arrangement, there is a focus on important things being learnt, where there is an immediate benefit to the organisation through the completion of current and futures related tasks, and in the longer term the student develops his/her capability by learning in the domain of a future employer. The TEFs involvement means that teacher education and associated research activities become current and aligned to the needs of teaching students, the teacher education faculty and the associated school.

Pulling these concepts together, the new program can be described as a formalized partnership arrangement between the teacher education faculty and a number of local schools and employers in which the program is considered a jointly owned, planned and operated learning-focused program. This has the consequences of local schools agreeing to:

- ‘host’ an agreed number of teaching students each year, on a long term basis, for teaching practicum purposes
- undertake joint ‘program development’, ‘operational management’, and ‘program review’ processes so that the TEF and schools have equal voices.

Similarly, the teacher education faculty agrees to:

- collaborate with local schools on all aspects of the teacher education program arrange one assessment piece in each unit of study as a real-life in-school learning and assessment task which has fixed learning outcomes, but flexible contextual elements to meet the needs of each practicum classroom

The TEF and schools jointly agrees to:

- adopt a common teaching practice model for teaching. In turn, this measure defined the type and the attributes of the ‘teacher’ that the program aimed to achieve. It runs counter to the pre-existing model in which a student teacher was dependent on the personal inclinations of a teacher supervisor for pedagogical expertise.
- Pool their resources, by way of funding joint appointments and professional development sessions, in order to achieve defined and mutually beneficial learning based outcomes.

Because the 'new program' operated side by side with the pre-existing B.Ed program in 'teach-out' mode, it was decided to undertake comparative research.

## Methodology

The comparative study used a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and semi-structured interviews aimed at determining the effect of the existing BEd program and the new program on recently graduated teachers and their school-based mentors. There were 221 graduating students, 91% female and 9% male, approximating the enrolment ratios in the programs. 61.2% were 25 years or younger a little over 21% of the respondents were 36-45 years. 54% were enrolled in the existing BEd program. The majority of students in both programs were enrolled in either Early Childhood Education or Primary (Elementary) strands.

The Likert scale student questionnaire asked the same questions of graduates from both the pre-existing BEd and the new program. Mentors in their Likert scale survey were asked to make judgments about the graduate student. T-tests and ANOVA statistical tests were carried out on the Likert scale questions to determine if there were any statistically significant differences in responses according to the various demographic variables. No statistically significant location, age, gender, age or degree differences were found between mentors or graduates

153 mentors (in school teachers who acted as practicum task mentors) were interviewed. They included those who had mentored only a pre-existing BEd program graduate student; those who had mentored only a 'new program' graduate student; and those who had mentored both pre-existing BEd program and 'new program' graduating students. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-tests were performed on both the student and mentor data. A factor analysis was performed on the student data, followed by a path analysis in order to specify which variables defined each factor. A number of results of interest to this paper were found.

Supplementary to this study, but focused in part on the pre-existing BEd program and the 'new program', was a federal parliamentary inquiry into teacher education in Australia (Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training (2007), 2007). Official transcripts are used to provide further insight into both programs.

## Results

Graduates of the new program rated their degree expectations as having been met at a higher level than did the pre-existing BEd graduate students. In some instances, the new program graduate student mean for survey responses was greater than 4, indicating a 'good' level on the 5-point scale where 1 is negative and 5 positive. Graduate student preparedness to begin teaching was apparent and there were positive responses to preparedness questions from both the pre-existing BEd program and the new program graduate students. However, the mean for new program graduate students was higher than for the pre-existing BEd program graduate students, indicating their perception of being better prepared. Students completing the new program ranked their perceived teaching abilities at a higher level than those doing the pre-existing BEd.

New program and existing BEd graduates were rated by their mentors as either as 'About Right' or 'Good' and their specific capabilities had means of greater than 4. There were no statistical differences in the ranking of graduate students across the two programs. This result was perceived to be an anomaly because the expectation was that mentors would



rate the new program graduates higher than the existing BEd program so additional research was conducted.

In a series of semi-structure interviews we asked mentors what they thought was meant by a university ‘partnership’ with schools for the preparation of teachers. The central theme that emerged was that of a “relationship”. Mentors listed a series of attributes that underpinned their view of “relationship”. They are communication attributes, roles and functions of each party and the type of relationship they wanted. Table 1 provides examples of such attributes.

The responses were mainly about how respondents perceived the university working with them. By ‘working with them’, mentors meant that they wanted the university to communicate regularly, provide opportunities for input into the program, work jointly to solve problems associated with fieldwork, and sharing resources such as expertise and facilities. Responding to what was the standard model of teacher education, data indicates

<b>Communication Attributes</b>	<b>Role and Functions</b>	<b>Type of Relationship</b>
Listen	Understanding	Close contact / strong link
Approachable	Negotiation	Support network
Consistent	Help solve problems	Seamlessness
Awareness	Provide a knowledge base	Work together / Team
Available	Share resources	Shared responsibility

**Table 1: Attributes of a Mentor’s View of ‘a relationship’**

that the mentors were pre-occupied with such procedural things as more visits by a university representative and simplify the (teaching practice) handbook. These elements are peripheral to the concept of partnership proposed in this paper.

Mentors were asked about the importance of a university – school partnership for preparing teachers. 69% of mentors agreed with the concept, while 31% disagreed. Those who were positive typically considered teacher education as a joint responsibility and that the mentoring task and teaching practice were part of teacher preparation. Those who responded negatively typically mentioned that they were busy with their classroom duties and that given a choice, they would not mentor a student. Mentors then considered ‘the placement’ of a student teacher as part of the teacher’s obligations for different reasons.

New program mentors generally thought that the development of conceptual and practical links between what students learned at university and what they needed in classrooms was achieved in the new program. Regular communication with the university, which was valued, opportunities to make input into the program were nominated as key elements to this response. It is pertinent that these mentors identified the practicum program as their design and, therefore, the logistics of classroom programming, placements, and content were seen as beneficial to the for the student teacher, classroom students and teachers.

A number of new program mentors commented on the knowledge and skill base held by graduate students, compared to their experiences with other programs, both in the associated university and beyond. New program mentors were generally pleased with the overall capabilities of graduates. This perception contrasts with pre-existing BEd mentors who were also asked to comment on their graduate student university learning and their capacity negotiate classrooms. No such mentor praised the existing BEd program. Overall, these mentors criticised the pre-existing BEd practicum as ill-conceived and that mentoring a pre-existing BEd student was generally a burden because the task imposed restraints on regular classroom work. Pre-existing BEd mentors also made comments about the lack of an

appropriate knowledge and skill base of their student teacher placements and the exclusion of school-based staff from making inputs into the teacher education program. This comment was typical of those made by pre-existing BEd mentors:

*There was not enough emphasis on the practical day-to-day routines of running a classroom. To learn how to cope with the day-to-day routine needs constant classroom practice. I felt that the university had, although it had a good understanding of philosophies, curriculum and Behaviour Management issues, lost touch with classroom practice (1-17-1).*

Mentors were asked about the value of practicum tasks completed during the teaching practice for the preparation of new teachers. Pre-existing BEd mentors were unanimous in their negative evaluation of university-based tasks. They believed that the pre-existing BEd tasks and overall program was too theoretical and had lost touch with contemporary classrooms. This mentor comment captures the sentiment.

*There was not enough emphasis on the practical day-to-day routines of running a classroom. To learn how to cope with the d2d (day -to-day) routine needs constant classroom practice. I felt that the uni had, although it had a good understanding of philosophies, curriculum and Behaviour Management issues, (the pre-existing BEd) had lost touch with classroom practice. (1-17-1 – experienced teacher who has coordinated BEd student placement in her school over many years).*

Most new program mentors considered the practicum tasks to be beneficial. Comments mentioned the flexibility of the tasks, fitting in with the mentor's classroom program, fitting the strategy in place for individual students and for the growth of the student teacher. The majority of new program mentors indicated modifications to their already established classroom curriculum program were not needed or were minor to accommodate a student teacher, unlike the regular requirement to fit existing program students and their handbook requirements.

Overall, most new program mentors had participated in new program working parties which developed such things as highly modified practicum handbooks. These people rated the new program highly. They found it comparatively simple to fit a teaching student into their school and classroom: they knew the expectations of the new program, which was developed jointly by them with other parties. It was noticeable that these mentors praised the 'new program' and in turn, praised the capabilities of their graduate students.

Mentors of the pre-existing BEd students felt the pre-existing BEd needed revising as the vast majority of pre-existing BEd mentors commented they had to make minor to significant modifications to their classroom program to fit pre-existing BEd students. Comments made about what distinguished the BEd, such as those below, were themed around the relatively short time BEd graduate students were in schools and the lack of fit between the BEd practicum program and classroom demands:

*Not long enough (BEd practicum) – not having the contact at the beginning of the year made the BEd program inadequate. (1-22 – new to service primary teacher)*  
*Confusing handbooks and a lack of contact with the university (1-5-1 – experienced BEd mentor)*

*Very prescriptive tasks; not much scope to be flexible. (5-4 – experienced BEd mentor)*

*The BEd student could have had more time in a school: prac blocks too short. (3-1 – experienced BEd mentor)*

As the interviews with mentors progressed, the topic of common teaching practice model for teaching, which was a foundation of the 'new program', was broached. It became apparent, that despite the many opportunities mentors had to engage and learn about the agreed and common pedagogic approach and which was a pre-requisite for mentoring in the

new program, that mentors tended to ignore this aspect, preferring instead to engage teaching students in learning about how they, the mentor, taught. These comments sum up the feelings of most mentors:

*It [common teaching practice model for teaching] was interesting... I could see what it was on about, but I've got my own approach ... which works for me. Teaching is something you develop in... yourself. Besides, I've seen these things come and go. (2-12 experienced classroom teacher and mentor in both the existing BEd and 'new program').*

*..... teaching hasn't changed much in the last one hundred years and I doubt very much it will change into the future. It is part of life, me the teacher them the kids and this is how business is done. If parents got their act together, not to mention the department, schools would be a lot easier to work in (4-17 experienced classroom teacher and mentor in both the existing BEd and 'new program').*

Some mentors took the opportunity to make explicit what they did teach their student teachers in lieu of the common teaching practice model for teaching in the 'new program':

*The ability to motivate learners, dealing with their apathy and the challenge of dealing with parents and the community and the lack of support you get. There is also a breeding of competition globally so everyone is out to win- kids, teachers, parents all have these expectations that you have to deal with balance and negotiate through (4-4 – Mentor from a sample primary school)*

*Conflict situations with parents is a big thing today, so knowing how to handle these situations. There are many confused expectations placed on us, for example curriculum ideas, what works, what's right, etc, peers of professional and others all have differing views on the matter. Being willing to change is a must. .. and of course behaviour management. (3-3 – secondary school teacher).*

In summary, new program mentors considered that the gap between what students learn at university and that which is required for work in classrooms had been reduced in the new program. This was reflected in the flexibility of the practicum tasks in the new program, and contrasted with the views of existing BEd mentors. Mentors of new program and pre-existing BEd program students valued close contact with a university, increased allocations of time spent by a student teacher in a school, flexibility in the practicum tasks and a knowledge and skill base of students that reflected workplace readiness. Having opportunities to give input into the teacher education program were also valued by mentors, and this was only identified for the new program because it was built-in.

Importantly, despite such findings, the premise of everyone learning and engaging with "the common teaching practice model for teaching" agreed to by the partnership, failed to be fully realised, a point reinforced in a parallel study by Allen (2008). Nevertheless, where the teacher education partnership model worked well, an emphasis on pedagogy and a language of instruction flourished in that school. Allen compared the logic of the new program with the effects of university lecturers and school mentors on the teaching practice and beliefs of recent graduates employed in a school system. Her results indicated that where there is a weak partnership between schools and the university, the logic of the program breaks down and often becomes non-existent. Second, where the agreed logic of the new program is unknown to or is not sustained by either lecturers or mentor teachers, it is undermined and has little effect on the graduate teacher.

Interestingly Allen (2008) provided evidence indicating that university staff either ignored the common model of teaching or actively undermined it by substituting idiosyncratic content in their teaching, despite the accumulating research evidence about the effect of teachers on student outcomes (See Wright et al, 1997). Similarly, teacher mentors required student teachers and later graduates to conform to school practices. For others there

were misunderstandings and often little understanding of the new program's concepts and practices, in spite of several years of professional development and learning, especially with university-based staff.

Another parallel study by Doe (2011) investigated the premise of mentor professional learning in the new program. Doe (2011) found that a professional learning partnership with a university can generate professional learning outcomes in teachers but is problematic for reasons as outlined by Allen (2008). Difficulties arose from elements such as leadership, different system priorities, communication systems, competing agendas and other partnership elements such as 'trust'. More specifically Doe (2011) concluded that the differing systems (i.e. the university and the school/education system) generate a variety of conflicts, but she concludes by adding that if these were adequately dealt with such initiatives would prosper.

The study as presented earlier and with that of Allen (2008) and Doe (2011) show that the very elements that are key to the foundations of a new program, and having been agreed to at various planning meetings of mentors, are the ones most likely to generate intransigence in teacher education faculties and in schools. This co-production of the *status quo* by self-generating mindsets and interpretive frameworks remains as a fundamental reason why it is difficult to 'change' the practices of schools and teacher education faculties.

On the topic of pooling resources to achieve mutually agreed learning-based outcomes, mentor responses appeared unified to the theme of 'mentor involvement in key positions in the new program' and were typified by mentor comments such as:

*It was great to have our people [other mentors] lecturing and acting as [practicum coordinators] as this meant we had a person on-site who knew what was happening and could tell us about it. (1-7-3)*

*[the mentor who was a joint appointment in the TEF] had an acute understanding of what the issues are in classroom land and this ensured [new program] was a good fit to my classroom and the student teachers needs (1-5)*

*[the mentor who was a joint appointment in the TEF] was an experienced teacher and this gave credibility to the PD sessions we attended (1-3-6)*

A State education department senior manager, who testified about the 'new program' to an Australian review into teacher education (Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training (2007), 2007), summed up how a major employer of teachers viewed the pre-existing BEd and the 'new program':

*This partnership [new program] has not been able to be mandated from the centre or by any one institution. It is a partnership that has been developed out of a set of relationships at a local level. ...it has been encouraged by each of the institutions.....the partnership has come from a different paradigm..... The traditional paradigm [the pre-existing BEd program] that I have been used to is: this is your business; this is my business, and if you get it wrong I will blame you. This is not about that paradigm at all. This is about a paradigm that says: teacher education is our business, and we are in a partnership in that construct. The notion that schools do not have a role in teacher education is fundamentally challenged in this partnership so that our schools, and our principals as leaders particularly, see themselves as having a role in developing the work force that they need to deliver on [the education department strategic plan]..... The commitment of schools to the partnership is a very serious one. It is intense and it does have costs for schools. It has a greater demand on a school than the traditional student-teacher practicum approach. It is more work but schools see the benefits from it for the partnership..... The other aspect of partnerships that is critical here is that the partners can influence in ways that cannot occur in a linear bureaucracy.... From [an employer of teachers] point of view I have been able to ask the university to ensure that there are certain dimensions of the*

*program that might be of importance to us as a partner that the university may not see as being as important— or may not be according priority to—that we can accord leverage to and ask the university to attend to. Within the university structure that is not possible. (McAlpine, 2005)*

Contrasting the pre-existing BEd program with the ‘new program’ a senior academic in both programs and a member of the TEF summed up the partnership in the ‘new program’ by commenting:

*...there is also a realisation that this [teacher education] is no longer a university responsibility. We see teacher education as a partnership. The program that we have put together here hones that. When you talk about the [new program], [the TEF] cannot say that they own it, nor can [the employers involved] or any other partners. It is actually a collective. (Lynch, 2005)*

So what can we make from this study?

## Summary and Conclusion

The majority of mentors from both programs consider preparing teachers a joint responsibility and these data suggest more contact with teacher education faculty and mentor opportunity to input the program will strengthen a school-university partnership. This could have the added benefit of improving school-university relations and lead to other initiatives where mutually beneficial outcomes are a focus.

When comparing the ‘new program’ to the pre-existing BEd program, mentors rated the ‘new program’ higher than that of the pre-existing BEd. Principally, these data suggest mentors consider close contact with a university, increased amounts of time spent by a student in a school, a knowledge and skill base in students that reflect work readiness, scope for the mentor to vary prescribed tasks, and the notion of having opportunity to input the teacher education program to be key components of what mentors consider is a successful teacher education partnership. If a mentor had the opportunity to make an input into program planning this had the corresponding effect of guaranteeing positive comments about that program.

Given the commentary in the teacher education literature these findings suggest that there are fundamental and irreversible changes afoot for TEFs and schools. We adopt this position to account for the work of the many commentators dealing with shifts in theory and practice across numerous industries and professions and especially the concepts developed by Christensen, Anthony and Roth (2004). If we are correct in this summation, TEFs and schools will need to become much better at scoping and budgeting the student teacher experience in the following ways.

The dissatisfaction with the standard ‘prac model’ by schools and teachers and the industry-wide limitations of it, together with the teacher education literature littered with “if only” language are indicators that of schools and teachers are “undershot” clients of TEFs. That is, the existing ‘prac model’ is not good enough for current conditions (Christensen, Anthony & Roth, 2004, p. 9). Partnership arrangements where TEFs, schools and teachers share decision-making and resource allocation go some way towards providing the mechanism for overcoming such dissatisfaction.

Procedures and processes that assist teachers and schools to do more easily and effectively what they are already trying to get done with student teachers without forcing them to significantly change behaviours or adopt new priorities according to TEF categories alone contribute to successful teacher education programs. Such partnership arrangements are more likely than not to establish mutually agreed criteria for the student teacher experience.

Integrated organisations are good at both radical changes and incremental innovations because they have a perspective on the whole operation rather than bits of it. Presently, TEFs and schools are disaggregated entities with competing logics that work against integrated student teacher experiences. A properly integrated teacher education arrangement involving TEFs and schools makes possible an effective partnership arrangement that is, *prima facie*, an essential part of the operation in today's world.

Aspects such as ease of implementation, how flexible the teacher/student relationship is in the context of busy teacher's work lives, how in-school and TEF costs are controlled, and how successfully the in-school experience can be customised for students are part of an integrated model. Based on a strong partnership, integrated teacher education organisations are potentially able to ensure that the level of complexity for the preparation of teachers is pitched appropriately for the TEF, teachers and schools.

The integrated approach disrupts the existing TEF/BEd practicum model because it replaces the only available service and product with which teachers, schools, the teacher education literature express dissatisfaction. Teachers and schools are only too happy to desert the BEd model for a more convenient integrated one with features that they value, as the data cited earlier show.

A strong partnership has the potential to put pressure on the TEF and schools organisations to organise themselves differently compared to the established TEF "prac" model. The critical elements of course design as well as the production of a service product are integrated into the student teacher experience, across teachers to lecturers, unit construction and student teacher performance outcomes, to the very concepts of 'teacher' and 'teaching'. These pressures ensure that the process of becoming a 'teacher' is at the core of the integrated organisational practice.

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