TENSIONS AND POSSIBILITIES IN ESTABLISHING SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS AS A CORE COMPONENT OF IMPROVED TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper draws on case study data produced in the Professional Practice Schools research project, which aims to investigate the establishment of such schools in South Africa. Given increasing learner under-performance, the spotlight falls on teaching in schools, and in particular the quality of initial teacher education. Current partnerships, as part of teacher education programmes between schools and the university where the research was done, proved to be ineffective as many tensions remain between the ways that these organisations see their respective roles in supporting student teachers in terms of teaching practice. In an attempt to understand these perceived divides from the perspective of the school community, research was conducted in three schools where a university has established teaching practice agreement. The community of practice model of Lave and Wenger (1991) was used to identify possibilities that may support the establishment of a more viable school-university partnership. This article finds that members of the school community understand their place and relationship with other communities involved in supporting the development of the teaching competence of student teachers. While teachers can significantly foreground tensions with other communities working in the same domain, they also have the ability to realise possibilities for productive interaction between all communities.

KEYWORDS

Teacher education, school-university partnerships, community of practice, mentor teachers, teacher educators

INTRODUCTION

Teacher education, and more specifically, are both central in rebuilding the educational landscape in South Africa. Given the generally poor learner performance record in schools as measured in international and national benchmark tests (HSRC, 2012), it is crucial not only that the quality of teaching in all schools in South Africa be improved, but more specifically that initial teacher education be significantly enhanced.

One of the most persistent complaints is the over-emphasis on educational theory in these programmes, while teaching in the real school situations is underplayed. This lead to a perception that the input from teacher educators at universities is regarded as more important in comparison to the work that mentor teachers do in schools. Korthagen et al (2005) claim that teacher educators not only have the role of supporting student teachers' learning about teaching, but in so doing model the role of the teacher through their own teaching. The mentor teachers' overall role, on the other hand, especially during practice teaching, is to promote the growth and development of the student teacher to improve student learning. Through explicit mentoring processes of the student teachers' planning, instruction, community involvement and mediation of content knowledge, they are guided towards pedagogical self-efficacy that will hopefully result in autonomous teaching practices (Hudson 2010).

However, this alone is not enough to prepare student teachers for the realities of the present-day school and curriculum. Instead, what is necessary is the formation of an effective and productive partnership (i.e. it will lead to learning), where both mentor teachers and teacher educators alike see themselves as key collaborators, each adding a necessary dimension to the development of student teachers' teaching competence and professional identity. While close cooperation and collaboration between universities and schools is imperative (Mutemeri & Chetty, 2011), real change towards quality initial teacher education is embedded in the development of agency – in the interaction between the role players, those in schools as well as those in the university. Schools should therefore play an active role in developing teaching methods to improve the quality of teaching and extend the knowledge of teaching and learning (European Commission, 2007b:1) and not merely be viewed as a site for students to practise their teaching skills and competencies (Zeichner, 2010:90).

PARTNERSHIPS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

The research literature indicates that despite the high value attached to collaboration, most school-university teacher education partnerships globally remain university-led (Furlong et al., 2000; Menter et al., 2006) and can be grouped into three types:

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

2

a) Partnerships characterised by separate roles for different stakeholders involved in the preparation of teachers;

b) Partnerships with a focus on pedagogic relationships. Here some partnerships focus on reflection on the integration of theory and practice, while others focus on teaching as a research-informed profession made possible by the close alignment of university (theory) and school experience (practice);

c) Partnerships characterised by collaboration on different scales. The focus in local collaborations are on initial preparation of new teachers; continuing professional development of all educators; support of children's learning; and support of practice-based inquiry directed toward improved teaching and learning (Schroyer et al., 2007:211). In larger-scale school-university collaborations a high priority is given to the notion of the 'scholarly teacher', which informs research within initial teacher education and the formation of teacher research networks aimed at improving teacher competencies and enhancing learner performance (Menter et al., 2010:28).

Recent studies in South Africa reveal that there is still poor collaboration between universities and schools. Mutemeri and Chetty (2011: 505) found that it is "evident that university practice is still characterised by the traditional 'application of theory model', where prospective teachers are supposed to learn theories at the university and then go to practise or apply what they have learnt in schools; a practice that, instead of emphasising on university school partnerships, widened the gap between theory and practice." Instead of allowing the old paradigm of university-based teacher education to continue, in which academic knowledge is viewed as the authoritative source of knowledge about teaching, ways should be found to establish a non-hierarchical interplay between academic and practitioner expertise. Such a new epistemology for teacher education may create expanded learning opportunities for student teachers with more authentic engagement of all role-players to become competent teachers.

This diversity of contexts in itself poses challenges as to how possible partnerships with schools can be established to ensure the same programme outcomes for all student teachers. A study by Pennefather (2008) explored a range of partnership approaches in a PGCE programme to challenge a deficiency framework many student teachers (and teacher educators) have regarding rural contexts. It was found that an understanding and acceptance of the challenges of different teaching contexts needs to be developed at a pre-service level (university) and be supported at an in-service level (schools). This is where partnerships provide "a potentially viable way for resources to be shared in a socially responsible way and in the process enhancing the quality of education" (Pennefather, 2008: 92). Furthermore, partnerships should provide the platform for building networks of support and marshalling resources to solve

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

3

and manage problems. Chikoko (2008:84) also explored the polarisation between the academic and the classroom practitioner, and argues that the demoralising and dehumanising effect of schools failing learners can be minimised if, through partnerships, there is "continued interaction between the two groups to bridge the gap dividing them, including the facilitation of small-scale research interactions and capacity building in less threatening environments for teachers".

Based on these studies, one can make the assumption that in most initial teacher education programmes in South Africa, the type of partnership found is one where teachers and academics occupy separate roles (Menter et al., 2010:28). This separation may not only have a detrimental effect on the professional development of student teachers, but may also avoid the necessary sharing of resources and pedagogical knowledge, which is crucial in so many schools.

IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

Edwards and Mutton (2007:505) argue that a strong policy emphasis on partnership would not in itself establish parity of involvement in the development of practice across institutional boundaries. What seem to be more important are the social interactions between different stakeholders, who all work to the common aim of helping student teachers to become competent teachers.

The environments in which teachers work today are increasingly becoming more challenging (European Commission, 2007a:1) and, therefore, the profession of teaching is becoming more complex. These teaching and learning complexities, as well as tensions regarding the theory-practice dichotomy, could be resolved by creating a space where the various complexities and tensions could be mediated, or the gap between theory and practice could be overcome (Mutemeri & Chetty, 2011:507). School-university partnerships, as part of a community of practice, could provide such a space where teacher educators and mentor teachers can resolve possible tensions and maximise the possibilities that emanate from the collaboration, as they focus on the common purpose of developing the pedagogical and professional competence of the student teacher.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Universities' search for partnerships to sustain increasing growth and support for students during their initial teacher education is implicit in Goodlad's (1991:10) argument that "any teacher education programme created or conducted without the collaboration of surrounding schools is defective". In each year of initial teacher education both lecturers and teachers contribute from within their

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

4

particular work contexts – that is, from the world of academe (theory) and the realities in school classrooms (practice) respectively – to the professional development of the student as a teacher.

The crucial element in establishing a 'platform' that will ensure increasing quality in initial teacher education is the possibility of enhanced learning for all involved – mentor teachers, teacher educators and student teachers. Whereas it was previously assumed that learning is something that individuals do, the model of situated learning devised by Lave and Wenger (1991) proposed that learning involves a process of engagement in a 'community of practice'. This is a helpful notion to understand the possible dynamics of an initial teacher education school-university partnership. A community of practice (CoP), according to Wenger et al. (2002:4-5), consists of "[g]roups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis … (as they) accumulate knowledge, they become informally bound by the value they find in learning together. Over time, they develop a unique perspective on their topic as well as a body of common knowledge, practices and approaches. They also develop personal relationships and establish ways of interacting. They may even develop a common sense of identity. They become a community of practice."

The group can evolve naturally because of the members' common interest in a particular domain or area (in this case supporting student teachers in the practice of teaching), or it can be created specifically with the goal of gaining knowledge related to their field. The Department of Education (2005:6) views the practice of teaching as a situated and interpretative contextual practice, as the practice involves pedagogical actions that are responsive to variable contextual realities that include the level of the learners as well as the socio-historical, political contexts of practice. It is through the process of sharing information and experiences with the group that the members learn from each other and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally. Furthermore, the more members learn through their social interactions, the more their participation will deepen.

A community of practice, according to Wenger (1998), has three crucial characteristics.

a) **The domain:** A CoP is not merely a grouping of friends or a network of connections between people. It has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. The commitment of different partners to the domain determines the membership. The domain is not necessarily something recognised as "expertise" outside the community.

b) **The community:** As CoP members pursue their interest in their domain, members participate in joint activities and discussions, help each other and

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

5

share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other. But members of a CoP do not necessarily work together on a daily basis.

c) **The practice:** A CoP is not merely a community of shared interests, but is made up of practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems – in short a shared practice which takes time and sustained interaction. The development of a shared practice may be more or less self-conscious. Still, in the course of all these conversations, they have developed a set of stories and resources that have become a shared repertoire for their practice.

These three elements in combination constitute a CoP, and it is by developing these three elements in parallel that such a community is cultivated (Wenger, 1998). Each community produces its own practice in relation to the whole system as they negotiate meaning (Wenger and Trayner, 2012). The way different 'groupings' in a CoP give substance to their actions and beliefs is therefore inherently diverse. However, it is this bounded character of the production of practice that makes the functioning of such a CoP dynamic and unpredictable. The way that knowledge is developed during practice teaching in a mentor teacher-teacher educator partnership is shaped by, for example, other practices in the teaching landscape like policy document interpretation, assessment, pedagogical approaches, management of learners, etc. "The composition of such a landscape is dynamic as communities emerge, merge, split, compete, complement each other, and disappear. And the boundaries between the practices involved are not necessarily peaceful or collaborative" (Wenger and Trayner, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study was driven by the following research question: How do school staff members involved in a current school-university partnership experience the nature of their collaboration in contributing to the academic and professional development of student teachers? An interpretivist approach was adopted as the purpose was to understand how the school participants (and their community) create the meaning of their collaboration with the university (Vanini, 2009) in preparing student teachers for the teaching profession. The researchers worked on the assumption that you cannot comprehend human understanding and its legitimation unless you grasp the meanings that people attach to their realities and their actions.

A case study research design was used involving the principals, liaison teachers and mentor teachers at three schools where student teachers of the university do their practice teaching during the third school term of the year. Data were collected through a structured interview (see a copy of the questionnaire as

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

6

Addendum 1) that was part of a bigger survey on perceptions of role-players on the establishment of Professional Practice Schools. Data relevant to answer the research question of this study were used for analytical purposes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in preparation for the thematic data analysis. Ethical clearance for the research was obtained the university as part of the Professional Practice Schools project.

FINDINGS

The content analysis of the data revealed that there are two dimensions to the complexities that are embedded in the partnership between the university and schools as they collaborate in preparing students to become teachers. On the one hand, there were clear areas of tensions – aspects where there was confusion, disagreement and expectations that are not met. On the other hand, seen against the background of finding viable ways to ensure that these existing 'partnerships' develop into functional communities of practice, a number of possibilities also started to emerge.

a) Tensions

The participants representing the university and those representing schools form two communities. Each community has a particular viewpoint or understanding of what their role is in the common project of contributing to the preparation of student teachers. These viewpoints are closely linked to the ethos of their respective institutions. In schools the emphasis is on teaching learners, something which Morrow (2007:63) defines as the practice of organising systematic learning. For those in schools, being able to organise systematic learning for learners with differing needs, abilities and socio-economic contexts is regarded as the core of their profession; they also see cultivating this ability as their contribution to those (the student teachers) who would like to become part of the teaching profession. On the other hand, universities are seen as primarily knowledge producers, so much of the scholarship of lecturers will be embedded in engagement with theory. While knowledge is used and produced in both contexts, it is understandable that teacher educators will perceive their input as more important, even though their stance may be removed from the realities in schools. Following Wenger's (1998) ideas on communities of practice, the tensions and possibilities that these differences and similarities may produce will inform the interactions that will take place between these two communities. The way that their collaborations are shaped and reshaped gives rise to the particular practice that will characterise the partnership (see Figure 1).

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

7
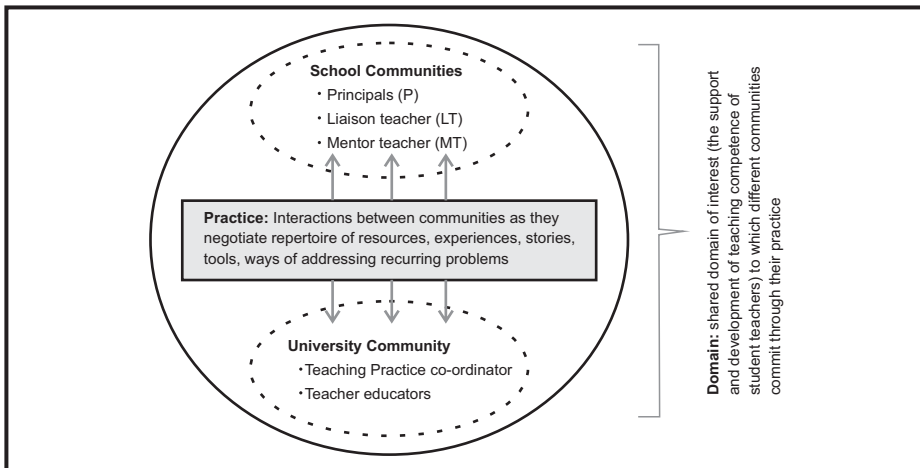
Figure 1: School-university partnership illustrated as a community of practice, according to Wenger (1998).

The first area of tension between universities and schools that emerged from the data was the interplay of power and authority between members of the two communities. There was a strong emphasis placed on the need for clarification of the roles of the different role players. From the following statements of the school community, this problem is linked to poor communication between the university and schools:

> Better communication between schools and universities is crucial to ensure meaningful and purposeful collaboration (Mt1).

> …we need to know exactly what the lecturers expect of the students and from us as the related subject teachers; we need clear guidelines (Mt2).

> The school should have an effective communication system with the university – the latter should know exactly who to speak to at the school – who is coordinating the practice teaching session – students should also know who they must liaise with and who will take responsibility for all their training (LT2).

Stemming from this perceived communication problem are issues of mistrust and questioning of the agreement between the university and the school. It appears that the school community has a fairly clear conception of what they are willing to contribute. This was a serious concern expressed especially by school principals.

> The universities must not expect schools to take over their teaching and training responsibilities. The university remains the primary teaching centre (P1).

> The role of the mentor will have to be clearly defined, i.e. a clear job description (P2).

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

8

The clarity that the school communities have about what should be done to support student teachers effectively is further accentuated by the insinuation that lecturers do not have a proper grasp of school realities and what is expected from teachers in schools, as a teacher states:

The universities should liaise with schools and get to know the school curriculum and resources in schools (MT1).

This statement can be interpreted as school communities questioning the understanding that teacher educators have about contemporary school realities. There is also the assumption that the theoretical and critical emphasis of teacher educators on pedagogy and the curriculum do not reflect an understanding of curriculum policy requirements that influence what teachers must be able to do. Furthermore, teachers also hold the view that teacher educators do not realise how current socio-economic realities impact on possible resource and learning support material used in schools – something which student teachers should realise, as they are trained using expensive and modern technology.

Issues associated with the logistics of the practice teaching period seem to have a high priority within the school community. These include aspects such as how long student teachers need to do their practical teaching and how many student teachers should be placed at a school during this period. The teaching practice period creates further tension between the university and schools, as schools are inundated with requests from other higher education institutions for placement of student teachers. Mentor teachers feel frustrated as they cannot work intensively with the students or complete their normal school duties.

Many student teachers sometimes places strain on the school. At one time there were 24 student teachers. Then one mentor sits with two or even three student teachers (Lt1).

…a very big group creates "space" problems e.g. not enough seats in the staff room – this may irritate some staff members (MT2).

Impact on the job requirements of mentor teachers is another source of tension that seriously concerns them, as they struggle to manage and execute their daily teaching tasks, which include extramural activities and administrative duties. Mentoring requires mentor teachers to take up the additional responsibility for student teachers as they need guidance in terms of planning, teaching, assessing, reflecting and developing their identity as teachers. Mentor teachers' sentiments are captured in the following comments.

Teachers are overwhelmed and overworked (Mt1).

Additional time is needed to give attention to students (P2).

Workload may affect teachers negatively. The quality of the student may affect the attitude of the teacher negatively (Mt2).

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

9

The impact of the normal duties of teachers does not only concern issues of work load. Time to do both teaching and mentoring emerges as another serious source of tension. This becomes even more problematic if a mentor teacher is allocated more than one student teacher.

> Sometimes there are too many student teachers for whom a good teaching practice experience must be provided (Mt3).

> Additional time is needed to give attention to students (P2).

> Need relieve time for mentor teachers (MT1 and 3).

The dire need for a clear structure that guides the practice emanating from the interactions between the university and school communities appears to be another area of tension. Both principals and liaison teachers expressed serious reservations about what they regard as superficial agreements between the university and schools.

> We would like to have an agreement and good communication from the university –students should also adhere to the arrangements and code of conduct of the school–opportunity to talk about what each stakeholder expects (Lt2).

> There should be clear guidelines developed by universities for schools regarding teaching practice. There should be clear policy on the roles and responsibilities of each party. Universities should organize workshops to develop joint understanding around teaching practice and schools need to collaborate more in organizing, planning and implementing teaching practice (LT1).

An added concern of schools is the absence of policy or other support from the provincial and national education departments. While these departments know that their schools are also expected to welcome student teachers to do their practice teaching and provide mentoring to them in addition to their main teaching job, they prefer not to become involved or give clear support or directions. Curriculum advisors who are tasked to support effective teaching do not visit schools regularly to avail themselves of the opportunity to contribute to the mentoring of student teachers. Members of the school community hold strong views in this regard.

> The role of the WCED is not clear … there is no synergy in the system (Mt2).

> The DBE should help in the development of policy to guide teaching practice (LT1).

We argue that all areas of tensions have in themselves the possibilities to be or to become positive, finding ways to cooperate and bridge divide between the teacher educator and the mentor teacher.

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

10

POSSIBILITIES

Although the previous section focused on tensions between the school and university community, the data also revealed possibilities that may contribute to an effective practice (see Figure 1), if the domain of this CoP – that is the support and development of teaching competence in student teachers – becomes the key driver of all interactions. In this way, what are now indicated as tensions, may with the necessary collaboration and a focus on the establishment of a sustainable school-university partnership, be turned into enabling conditions for quality initial teacher education.

The issues related to the interplay of power and authority indicate that unequal membership in this community of practice will focus on a 'fight' between schools and the university for superiority instead of focusing on what each can bring to the practice so that the shared goal can be realised. The data indicate that schools, despite a perceived unequal partnership, are interested in collaborating so that both student teacher and the school will benefit from it. One principal argued as follows:

> I made myself available during the university meetings to assist in developing such a system to support students. I believe my school has the existing structures to build such a partnership and make it part of our school. The structure shouldn't be too high up, but more a flat structure where each person can develop his/her leadership skill. The idea is that the student should become so part of the structure that his/her development can occur at the maximum level (P1).

> There are so many dynamic things happening in a school and it is important these things be shared with the universities. There is a need for it. Information can be shared amongst the school and the university (P1).

Good planning is seen as countering the issue of vague roles and partnership interaction mentioned earlier under areas of tensions. Time will be needed to clarify exactly how the interactions between communities will work.

> Good planning will overcome all these constraints; make time, develop structures such that all the roles are clearly defined (P1).

The fact that schools feel that the vagueness in the partnership planning led to a perception that universities expect more from schools than they are willing to offer creates a possible platform from where the respective responsibilities and expectations of the communities can be renegotiated and clarified. This will also offer the space to deliberate on the 'old' accusation that the university emphasises theory at the cost of addressing the realities of the teaching situation.

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

11

The universities must not expect schools to take over their teaching and training responsibilities. The university remains the primary teaching centre. The school is secondary – they add to the existing university structures (P1).

The closer co-operation between the university and the school will help to narrow the gap between what schools offer learners and what is expected at university. There is already a very positive attitude towards supporting student teachers during their practice teaching. Good consideration will have to be given to the selection of the ideal teachers that will become mentors in the programme – this is because their expertise and mentorship is not only for the benefit of the students, but also for other subject teachers and the rest of the school (P2).

The argument that tensions can be converted into possibilities is well explained by one of the principals:

The different approaches to teaching and learning between the university and schools are very good. The fact that universities normally take a critical stance with regard to curriculum (policy), will help the school also to have a deeper look at what we are doing. It will help us to enrich our own internal curriculum. I am saying this while realizing that we cannot ignore the stated curriculum, but we are not expected to do only what is stated in the curriculum. Different methodologies to teaching are always helpful, but universities should also realize that schools have a basic curriculum that must be covered – that cannot be compromised. Universities should accept that schools have a duty to cover the curriculum prescribed by the Department of Education (P2).

With the demand for more well-qualified teachers, schools come increasingly under pressure to accept more student teachers from different universities to do their practice teaching under the guidance of mentor teachers. While schools are sympathetic to this reality, it emerge that quality mentorship is a more important priority for them. This may offer a possibility to deal with existing logistical challenges. Such a stance should deepen the functioning of the CoP and deliver student teachers who are competent teachers.

Yes, we have students from other institutions. We would, however, like to limit the number of students, in that way we can also have a say to an extent in the quality of students we receive. Practice teaching for a whole term is fantastic (Lt2).

…universities have different time slots for teaching practice. The school prefers a longer periods so that students get a good idea of the school programme on a daily basis (LT3).

School staff members could see the teaching practice period as a logistical opportunity as student teachers could stand in as teaching relief in cases such

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

12

as maternity leave or study leave for teaching staff. A principal explains this phenomenon as follows:

> Unwilling teachers … teachers who treat the students as if they are their slaves for the period of teaching practice. Unhelpful and unsympathetic teachers who offer to take students, but then go back on their word and create further problems (P3).

This, however, could become a logistical nightmare as student teachers could become exploited in the sense that the student teachers are expected to conduct full-time teaching without the necessary mentoring, guidance and support.

With the indication from school communities that quality mentorship is a priority for them, they realise that creative and practical ways should be explored to deal with the possible impact on their normal job requirements as teachers. From the school side, the necessary mentoring will only be possible if some teachers are allocated to duty to serve as dedicated mentor teachers. This will have financial implications as:

> … some teachers will have to be 'freed' from some of their duties – work cannot be added on top of existing workload (P2).

If this is not possible, then the school community argues that universities should consider certain strategies to limit the pressure on individual placement schools:

> We would, however, like to limit the number of students – in that way we can also have a say to an extent in the quality of students we receive (Lt2).

> The quality of the student may affect the attitude of the teacher negatively; students must be qualified and prepared to make a contribution (MT2).

Mentor teachers feel that they need some kind of reward or recognition for extra time taken for additional work they do to support and mentor student teachers. Currently, teachers do most of the mentoring and assessment of student teachers during teaching practice. As teachers are convinced that they too are engaged in academic work, especially helping student teachers to mediate the divide between theory and practice, there must be some acknowledgement or recognition of the work they are doing, as the following comments indicate.

> Remuneration for mentors, not from the school or parents fees … recognition of work done (Mt1).

> Compensation may be requested by the teachers. Teachers who are expected to do dedicated mentoring may expect financial remuneration as it may be regarded as work on work (P2).

The success of the CoP is to a large extent dependent on the willingness of each community to realise that the domain – their shared goal – is more important than

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

13

their differences and perceived position in the 'hierarchy'. They should find meaningful ways to meet each other halfway. The statement that the absence of a negotiated memorandum of understanding is a crucial limitation offers a possibility for the communities to agree on what a clear structure can be that can guide the practice. Dealing with this issue will also have further consequences, as explained by one of the principals:

> The closer co-operation between the university and the school will help to narrow the gap between what the school offers learners and what is expected at university … a detailed and well formulated MOU [Memorandum of Understanding] is compulsory. Schools and universities should be involved in drafting the MOU (P2).

The vagueness mentioned in the terms of how the communities operate may result in misplaced expectations and continually shifting responsibilities. The emphasis on detail and clear formulation is therefore understandable, as this will address the concerns raised. The distant relationship of the provincial and national governments with regard to initial teacher training seems to be another important impediment in the involvement of schools in the domain of supporting the development of teaching competence. School consequently have strong views on any action from government:

> The government must not use schools offering placement as a dumping site of student teachers. The department must see the roles of all role players as important (P1).

While schools are accountable to the education departments, schools also know that not all decisions that the education departments make and policy instructions that they issue are always what schools and universities regard as aligned with the domain - that is supporting the development of teaching competence.

CONCLUSION

This study foregrounded the experiences and perceptions of key persons in the school community where student teachers of the university are placed annually to do their practice teaching. The development of teaching competence in student teachers is, however, also the responsibility of the teacher educators at the university, where the focus is more theoretical. In any partnership with a common purpose, as in the model of a CoP used here, there are tensions in the interactions between the mentioned communities.

This study showed that those in the teaching community reflect deeply on their position in this CoP (in relation to the university community). While they can identify tensions in and around their community, embedded in these tensions are also possibilities of working towards a productive practice that is aligned with the domain.

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

14

Based on the nature of these communities, one can assume that their actions, beliefs, views about pedagogy and learning, etc. are operational in, as well as across, what is perceived as a bounded space. The way that the practice (interactions) between communities will develop is dependent on how carefully the different aspects that were mentioned under 'tensions' and 'possibilities' are operationalised and managed as boundary processes. The value of these boundary processes depends ultimately on the depth of commitment of the school and university communities to the domain and practices involved. The qualities of what happens in each community in relation to the shared goal complement the effectiveness of the partnership. One can therefore agree with Wenger (n/a) that there is therefore a profound paradox at the heart of learning in a system of practices: the learning and innovative potential of the whole system lie in the coexistence of depth within practices and active boundaries across practices.

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

15

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Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

16

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Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

17

APPENDIX 1

SCHOOL-BASED INTERVIEWS

A. Principal or designate (P)
1. What in your view are the central characteristics that a Professional Practice school should possess?
2. Do you support the idea of establishing Professional Practice schools? Why/ why not?
3. Would you consider your school to be an example of a Professional Practice school? Why? Why not? **Please link your answer to the following:** a. curriculum, teaching and learning b. school organization c. professional development

4. What "objective" factors enable and constrain the establishment of PPSs?
   Discuss whichever of the factors below you find important.
 	
Policies   What enables the establishment of PPSs?
                  What constrains the establishment of PPSs
                  What could be done to address these constraints?
Resources   What enables the establishment of PPSs?
                  What constrains the establishment of PPSs
                  What could be done to address these constraints?
 	
Funding   What enables the establishment of PPSs?
                  What constrains the establishment of PPSs
                  What could be done to address these constraints?
 	
Other?

5. What qualitative factors enable and constrain the establishment of PPSs?
   Discuss whichever of the factors below you find important.
 	
Attitudes   What enables the establishment of PPSs?
                  What constrains the establishment of PPSs
                  What could be done to address these constraints?
 	
Approaches to teacher education
                  What enables the establishment of PPSs?
                  What constrains the establishment of PPSs
                  What could be done to address these constraints?
 	
Professional development
                  What enables the establishment of PPSs?
                  What constrains the establishment of PPSs
                  What could be done to address these constraints?
Other?

6. Any other comments?

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

18

B. Liaison Teacher (LT)
1. What in your view are the central characteristics that a Professional Practice school should possess?
2. Do you support the idea of establishing Professional Practice schools? Why/ why not?
3. Would you consider your school to be an example of a Professional Practice school? Why? Why not? **Please link your answer to the following:** a. curriculum, teaching and learning b. school organization c. professional development
4. Does more than one university place students at your school for Teaching Practice? 5. If so, are there any problems with this arrangement?
6. Do you have a MoU or a formal agreement with any of these universities? **If so, please provide a copy.** a. What is the purpose of the MoU? b. Are there aspects that you would like to change?
7. What do you see as the most significant role of Teaching Practice in teacher education?
8. What in your view needs to be in place to strengthen the relationship between the university and schools in order to improve teacher education? a. From the side of the university? b. From the side of the school? c. From the side of the Department of Education?
9. What are the constraints on a positive relationship between universities and schools for Teaching Practice? 10. How can these constraints be overcome?
11. Any other comments?
C. Mentor teachers (MT)
Explain philosophy and purpose of Professional Practice schools (have summary handout)
1. What in your view are the central characteristics that a Professional Practice school should possess?
2. Do you support the idea of establishing Professional Practice schools? Why/ why not?
3. Would you consider your school to be an example of a Professional Practice school? Why? Why not? **Please link your answer to:** a. curriculum, teaching and learning b. school organization c. professional development

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

19

4. What do you see as the most significant role of Teaching Practice in teacher education?
5. What in your view needs to be in place to strengthen the relationship between the university and schools in order to improve teacher education? a. From the side of the university? b. From the side of the school? c. From the side of the Department of Education?
6. What are the constraints on a positive relationship between universities and schools for Teaching Practice? 7. How can these constraints be overcome?
8. Any other comments?

Tensions and possibilities in establishing school-university partnerships as a core component of improved teacher education

20