

Title page**Title**

Promoting collaborative practice and reciprocity in initial teacher education: realising a
'dialogic space' through video capture analysis

Authors

Bernadette Youens*, Lindsey Smethem and Stefanie Sullivan

School of Education, Jubilee Campus, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, NG8 1BB.

bernadette.youens@nottingham.ac.uk

0044 115 951 4507 (telephone)

0044 115 951 4559 (fax)

*corresponding author

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Abstract

This paper explores the potential of video capture to generate a collaborative space for teacher preparation; a space in which traditional hierarchies and boundaries between actors (student teacher, school mentor and university tutor) and knowledges (academic, professional and practical) are disrupted. The study, based in a teacher education department in an English university, is contextualised in the policy context of school-university partnerships. Video capture is used as a vehicle to promote dialogue and collaborative practice between partners during school based elements of a teacher preparation course. Analysis highlights the power of this space to promote reciprocal learning across the partnership. [100 words]

Key words

teacher preparation; partnerships; video capture; student teachers; 'third space'

Introduction

A perennial challenge in initial teacher preparation courses across international contexts is developing coherent learning experiences for pre-service teachers that acknowledge the expertise and contexts of the two principal spaces of student teacher learning: universities and schools (e.g. Clandinnin 2008, le Cornu 2010 and Zeichner 2010). In this paper we examine how one university, located in the midlands of England, has developed video capture analysis as a vehicle to embed collaborative and dialogic approaches to learning about teaching and to engineer an interactive space in an initial teacher education course.

Even though there are common overarching themes in teacher preparation, policies and contexts create particularities in how these themes are played out at a national and local level. This paper therefore begins by setting out the national context of beginning teacher education in England and by explaining the local context of the study.

Context

National context

Although universities in England have a long history of working successfully in collaboration with local schools in initial teacher education, legislation introduced in 1992 heralded significant changes to the balance and nature of these relationships (DfE, 1992).

Underpinning the changes was a desire on the part of the Conservative government of the day to reduce the influence of universities on pre-service teacher education (see e.g. Furlong et al. 2000) and move towards school-based teacher training. The mandated changes were accompanied by a re-engineering of the language used in policy discourse to promote a view of a skills-based, apprenticeship model of teacher education. For example ‘initial teacher education (ITE)’ was reframed as ‘initial teacher training (ITT)’ and ‘student teachers’

became referred to as ‘trainee teachers’. The drive to wrest initial teacher preparation from universities, or ‘higher education institution (HEI) providers’ in the new language, included setting up the national Teacher Training Agency (TTA) in 1994. This body was given a wide-ranging remit that encompassed managing all aspects of pre-service teacher education, from recruitment to the allocation of places and resources and the structure and content of courses (Mahoney and Hextall, 1997, *inter alia*).

Central to the changes introduced in 1992 was the formalisation of school-university partnership arrangements, including the apparently transparent distribution of resources, and an expectation that schools and universities would ‘exercise a joint responsibility for the planning and management of courses and the selection, training and assessment of students’ (DfE, 1992, para. 14). In the immediate aftermath of the introduction of these changes, the work of the newly formalised partnerships focused on negotiating roles and responsibilities and agreeing the transfer of resources in a new and shifting context. The term ‘mentoring’ was adopted to describe the now significant role to be undertaken by experienced teachers working with student teachers during school based placements. The ‘mentor’ in school was to be responsible for implementing the joint ‘training and assessment of student teachers’ and one way that universities reconceptualised their role in ITE was to undertake the design and implementation of mentor training programmes. This shift and its impact on the nature of partnerships have been researched extensively (e.g. Williams and Soares 2002). Furlong et al elegantly summarise the impact of this reform agenda on the initial teacher education landscape in England in this period:

the system (has been) moved from one of diversity and autonomy to one of unanimity and central control. What the government and particularly the TTA, had wanted, was a common system, with common standards and procedures no matter who was providing the training or where: this was how the TTA defined quality (Furlong et al., 2000).

The subsequent evolution of school-university partnerships has generally led to a greater recognition and understanding of the different, yet complementary, expertise contributed by university tutors and school mentors, yet there remain stubborn barriers to achieving what Furlong et al (2000) would consider genuinely ‘collaborative’ partnerships. In particular, the accountability agenda imposed on the sector in the 1990s soon extended to schools, and in recent years has intensified considerably (Ball, 2003 *inter alia*). Schools have progressively come under increasing pressure to meet national targets in external examinations and to be awarded at least a ‘good’ grade in school inspections. The backwash effect of these drivers on classroom teachers inevitably leads to tensions in how they work with student teachers. Although these issues have been exacerbated by recent political developments, the need to work with partner schools to ensure that discussions with student teachers are developmental is not a new phenomenon (Edwards, 2005). Another barrier is the traditional conception of roles within teacher preparation courses. Again this is an international challenge as Kruger et al. writing within an Australian context note:

Intentional or not, teacher education is commonly experienced as sets of hierarchies: the university and the school; the teacher educator and the teacher; the teacher and the pre-service teacher and the teacher educator and the pre-service teacher (2009, p.94).

For some school mentors, and indeed some university tutors, residual issues of hierarchies of knowledge and experience do linger and can influence the nature of partnership relationships. For example, it is still common for student teachers to report that mentors and teaching colleagues in a placement school undermine the relevance of the university based elements of the course (Christie et al. 2007). Similarly, university tutors can find it challenging to prepare teachers to work in a school system in conflict with their personal philosophy of education which can undermine the work of colleagues in schools (Hall and Schulz, 2004). University-

school divides are therefore deeply embedded in culture and practice and changing these practices requires considerable deliberation and commitment (Walkington, 2007).

Local context

The school-university partnership in this study has matured in the intervening two decades and the longevity of the partnership has been sustained by a complex network of fluid relationships where ‘trust and shared norms and values... function as social glue or bonding social capital’ (Dhillon, 2009, p. 701). These conditions mean that, in general, the partnership is well-positioned to extend and deepen the nature of its work with a commitment to collaborative practice evident in course documentation and external reports.

The most common pre-service teacher education route in England is the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) which leads to the professional award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and an academic qualification (Smithers and Robinson, 2011). The structure of all teacher preparation courses in England is mandated by central government: secondary PGCE courses are 36 weeks in length with 24 weeks of the course spent in school and 12 weeks in a university. The school-based elements of PGCE courses are usually discrete phases distributed across the 36 weeks. Almost all PGCE courses include a sustained period of school-based practice, referred to as the main ‘teaching practice’ or the ‘practicum’.

Adopting Le Cornu and Ewing’s (2008) typology of partnerships, the journey of this particular partnership can be conceptualised as moving from a ‘traditional’ phase in the very early years of formal partnership to a confidently reflective partnership characterised by school-based mentors and university tutors working together so that student teachers are supported ‘to theorise their own accounts of practice and then helped to consider how they

might use these deeper understandings to develop their practice' (p.1802). To move beyond a reflective partnership to a learning communities model a programme needs to include 'generative ways for prospective teachers, experienced teachers and teacher educators alike to work together in communities of learners' (Cochran-Smith, 2003, p. 24). That the partnership in this study is in a position to consider a learning communities model is testament to institutional commitment over a period of over twenty years to invest significant human resource in nurturing school-university relationships and thereby the local partnership of schools. However, although significant progress has been made in remodelling school-university partnerships, with a significant will on both sides to work collaboratively, enduring and emerging policy contexts continue to make partnership work challenging.

Spaces in teacher preparation programmes

It is within the context of this particular development phase of the partnership in this study that the potential for video capture to enhance student teachers' professional learning and to offer opportunities to generate practices 'that can help reconceptualise the binary between theoretical and practical knowledge needed for teaching' (Cochran-Smith and Lyttle, 1999, p. 272) and so disrupt the traditional hierarchies of knowledge was identified.

The national context determines specific parameters for teacher preparation programmes in England and influences the nature of the school contexts that student teachers find themselves in during school-based phases of teacher preparation courses. These contexts tend to exacerbate rather than ameliorate the dislocation of student teachers' learning. This is particularly true of the practicum element of the course which to maximise student teachers' learning should be an experience that 'stands in an intermediate space between the practice

world, the 'lay' world of ordinary life, and the esoteric world of the academy' (Schön, 1987, p. 37 in Wilson and I'Anson 2006). The intensification of teachers' work in response to national policy agendas can militate against the creation of 'intermediate spaces' where student teachers are encouraged to experiment and reflect on the role of a teacher. The impact of policy agendas on schools' everyday work is particularly significant in the English context as the quality of the relationship between the student teacher and the mentor is a key aspect of a successful practicum experience (Hawkey, 2006).

A number of studies have sought to generate discrete spaces within teacher preparation programmes drawing on Bhabha's ideas of cultural hybridity as a 'third space' where innovative sites for collaboration and contestation emerge at the interstices of domains of difference (e.g. Moje et al 2004, Zeichner 2010, Cuenca et al 2011 and Martin et al 2011). These boundary engagements of difference can generate creative spaces where normative expectations of development or progress can be challenged and where competing forms of knowledge or discourse are integrated or hybridised (Bhabha 1990, 1994). Gutierrez (2008) develops the idea further and identifies 'collective third spaces' ; spaces which recognise not only traditional formal learning, so called 'vertical learning', but also knowledge from within and across informal learning experiences, 'horizontal learning'. Inter-weaving vertical and horizontal forms of expertise generates a transformative and collective 'third space' in which the potential for an expanded form of development of new knowledge is heightened (Gutierrez, 2008). Cuenca et al (2011) in developing the role of practicum clinical supervisors sought to complicate the boundaries separating knowledge in different settings 'based on the premise that inquiry into the relationship between academic and practical knowledge is key in interrupting the hierarchy often found in these discourses' (p. 1069). In an earlier study, Moje et al (2004) identified the potential for 'third space' to be positioned in

education research as a place where conversational spaces bring competing discourses into dialogue with each other. Thomson et al (2010) mobilised Lefevbre's spatial theory to analyse the ways in which an individual student 'carves out an alternative everyday life in a small and intermittent counter space, in the interstices of the school day' and speculate 'what might be achieved had her school and their teachers been in a position/positioned to engage in conversation, to build relationships, and to create pedagogical dialogue about what is worth learning, why and how' (p. 652). In seeking ways to disrupt the binary of school and university hierarchies, and creating experiences of working collaboratively and dialogically within the interstices of everyday school life, 'third spaces' can afford student teachers opportunities to develop the competencies needed to promote their students' agency in classrooms (Edwards,2005). This idea is expanded in the Finnish context by Lipponen and Kumpulainen (2011) who conceptualise spaces in teacher education through the lens of agency, positing that 'discussion based and dialogic learning cultures can provide students diverse professional learning spaces' (p. 813). The limitations of applying third space theory to education research have been advanced by Bruna who argues that educators cannot create 'third spaces' and warns of the dangers inherent in generating practices that perpetuate authority and control (Bruna 2009 in Cuenca 2011). However, as multiple spatial and temporal boundaries, and therefore multiple 'hybrid spaces', do exist in teacher education programmes it can be argued, Bruna's misgivings notwithstanding, that researching whether such spaces can be harnessed to generate innovative and less hierarchical ways for beginning teachers to learn has merit.

In this paper the potential of video capture as a vehicle to generate interactive spaces in which traditional hierarchies and boundaries between the principal actors in teacher preparation and academic, professional and practical knowledges could be disrupted is explored.

The study: video capture as an approach to promoting student teacher reflection and development on a teacher preparation course

The potential to extend the use of video technology in both in-service and pre-service teacher education is well recognised and there is now a significant body of literature on this subject. A particular focus of research studies has been on the use of video to aid and strengthen reflection (Maclean and White, 2007), and to afford the opportunity for capturing teaching for later analysis (Sherin and van Es, 2005). There is also evidence that video promotes knowledge activation (Seidel et al 2011) and a particularly deep level of engagement and involvement in a topic, referred to as ‘immersion’ by Goldman (2007). Advancing technology, particularly the advent of affordable digital video cameras, offers opportunities to extend the use of video capture for analysis of, and exemplification of, teaching. Key themes underpinning the increased use of video technology in the partnership over a number of years included sustainability and the engagement of all members of the partnership. To achieve this significant professional development time was invested in preparing tutors, mentors and student teachers to work effectively and collaboratively with video technology. Ethical issues were considered particularly carefully and agreement secured to allow filming of lessons with an undertaking that footage would only be used in the school for professional development purposes and deleted by the end of the placement. Participants also consented to completing evaluation questionnaires, analysis of video and written materials relating to the ‘learning conversation’ and course assignments (Sorensen et al, 2010).

A long-established early opportunity to initiate reflective practice within many teacher preparation courses, including the course in this study, is microteaching where student teachers select and explain a concept to subject teaching peers and receive peer and tutor

feedback (Brown, 1975). Although this activity takes place within the university space it can provide a 'transition space' which offers student teachers opportunities to reflect through engagement with multiple perspectives (Wilson and I'Anson, 2006). Micro-teaching also offers a space where student teachers can begin to work collaboratively in a managed environment to develop their skills in reflection, critique and debate (Maclean and White 2007, Hennessy and Deaney 2009).

The particular use of video capture in this study was where a university tutor visit during the practicum was reconceptualised as a space for a 'learning conversation' between the triad of student teacher, teacher mentor and tutor. The conversation focused on sections of video capture of classroom practice selected and edited by the student teacher. The student teacher was also responsible for setting the agenda for the 'learning conversation' and for the preparation of resources and supporting paperwork. In this model student teachers were therefore positioned to inhabit a role usually taken by the mentor or tutor. A university session before the practicum prepared student teachers in how to select extracts of recorded lessons for discussion and negotiated the expectations of how student teachers would lead the conversation.

Analysis of evaluation comments from participating student teachers found that 'learning conversations' focused on specific aspects of learning, thus supporting Borko et al's (2008) finding that collaborative analysis of video 'can support the close examination of student thinking and learning' (p.421). However, it was from analysis of a broader data-set (including: resources prepared for the meeting; video recording of the meeting; written work; evaluation questionnaires) that the potential of asynchronous video reflection on the professional development of student teachers and on relationships within the 'learning

conversation' triad emerged. To exemplify this finding we draw on data from Joe and Anna, two student mathematics teachers in relation to two themes: learning to notice and linking theory and practice. One of the authors participated in the two learning conversations in the role of university tutor alongside each student teacher and an experienced mathematics mentor.

Learning to notice

In preparation for the video review meeting, Joe selected a lesson with a Year 9 (grade 8) class and identified supporting students' learning as the overarching theme for the 'learning conversation'. Through detailed and repeated analysis of his selected video footage, Joe noticed that one particular pupil, Danny, was engaged in the lesson until Joe failed to see that he had raised his hand to ask a question. When ignored, Danny physically retracted, slouching down into his chair, and from this point on was increasingly off task, disengaged and distracting other pupils in the class. Joe's analysis of the incident provides an interesting example of Mason's (2002) 'discipline of noticing' which enables teachers to reason about events based on their professional knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning (Seidel et al, 2011). One of the most striking images from analysis of the data came from the video of the learning conversation where all members of the triad peer intently at the footage repeatedly analysing the key moment at which Danny's engagement in the lesson was lost. The ensuing discussion about the consequences of that single oversight involved the three actors in an extensive and interactive triadic dialogue to which they contributed different perspectives, and as such presented a learning opportunity for all. It is also an example where 'discussion-based and dialogic learning cultures can provide student teachers with cultural bridges to participate meaningfully and powerfully in rich and diverse

professional learning spaces' (Lipponen and Kumpulainen, 2011, p. 813). Evidence of the impact of that discussion meeting on Joe's ability to notice and to deepen his awareness of the links between theory and practice are seen in a subsequent piece of writing. Referring to video footage, Joe selects two episodes from conversations with individual pupils and writes self critically:

we can see that in these two brief exchanges, I made no attempt to diagnose the pupils' understanding. I gave the pupils the correct answer without checking to make sure that it held any meaning for them.

Anna: bridging the theory-learning divide

Anna selected 'contingent' teaching and different approaches to supporting the learning of pupils as the foci for her 'learning conversation'. Contingent teaching is a learning theory where pupils are given differentiated support at an appropriate level and the support is progressively withdrawn as the pupil begins to achieve independence (Wood 1987). In later writing, the 'learning conversation' can be seen to afford Anna the opportunity to explore theory in and through practice leading her to focus closely on learners' involvement and how she responds to their needs (Wilson and I'Anson, 2007, Hennessy and Deaney 2009):

I then thought back to the conversation from my videoed lesson which I had earlier identified as not being contingent and attempted to draft out how the levels of control could have been applied to the situation...I found it very difficult to come up with this structure, and it took a lot of thinking about and adjusting to get to a final version.

Later in the same piece of writing she signals the need to review and evaluate her practice in relation to linking theory with practice,

'Whilst not achieving a completely contingent practice, it was encouraging that my results suggested what I did do was effective; pupils seemed to learn better and valued the support more highly'.

Here Anna is developing a knowledge not of 'what to do next', but rather, knowledge of how to interpret and reflect on classroom practices (Sherin, 2004 p17). Thus supporting Harford et al (2010) who found that peer-video analysis 'facilitated student teachers to move

from a focus on the technical aspects of their practice towards a closer examination of their theoretical constructs underpinning their practice' (p.58) and who describe the use of video as 'holding up a mirror from which student teachers could actually see the reality of their practice, it also enabled them to deconstruct and theorise the complexity of their practice' (p.65). However, it is argued that it is in the discussion of the video rather than primarily in the 'reality of practice' that the potential for transformative practice is evident.

Discussion

The benefits of video capture as a vehicle for analysis of teaching in this initial teacher preparation course have been significant at a number of different levels. The most obvious benefits of the intervention are in relation to the professional learning of the student teachers. Through a series of planned and supported analyses of video capture, student teachers have acquired models of how to use video capture as a tool for reflection on, and analysis of, classroom practice with an increasing focus on pupil learning. Our study has confirmed the findings of other studies in relation to student teacher development. For example in supporting the development of teacher identity through selecting edited sections of classroom practice video for collaborative discussion this 'gave teachers agency in controlling the aspects of their teaching to be discussed and created multiple layers of reflection' (Brookfield, 1995 cited in Maclean and White, 2007). In this context agency is considered as a 'breaking away from a given frame of action and as taking the initiative to transform it', that is as transformational agency (Lipponen and Kumpulainen, 2011). Furthermore, in the examples of student teacher learning discussed above the quality and depth of the discussions and the further analysis evident in the student teachers' writing support Fullan's assertion that 'integration makes it more likely that students' learning will transfer to the early career

experience' (Fullan,1995). Thus the findings presented offer further support to the notion that the process of editing facilitates deeper reflection on teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Maclean and White, 2007).

However it is the systemic benefits to the partnership, and to the quality and nature of relationships between university tutors, mentors and student teachers, that are of greater significance. Assigning responsibility for reviewing video capture evidence, agenda setting and preparing supporting resources to student teachers has had a transformative effect on the quality and nature of school-based discussions. Positioning student teachers as responsible for the meeting enabled them to take ownership of their professional development by selecting areas of practice to discuss with experienced colleagues. In this way, the learning conversation model promotes a dialogic learning culture which itself provides a cultural bridge to facilitate participation in diverse professional learning spaces (Lipponen and Kampulainen, 2011). The findings also concur with Charteris and Smardon who reported that using video to have a 'second look, second think' allowed teachers to 'think further and more deeply on their learning dialogue, affording additional insights' (2013, p.168).

Asynchronous review of a recorded lesson has also enabled quality in-depth discussions to take place during tutor visits to schools that hitherto were often thwarted by the everyday 'busy-ness' of teachers and schools. This achievement on its own is no mean feat; generating space where high quality discussions between student teacher, mentor and tutor can routinely occur in schools is a long-standing aim of many teacher education programmes which often proves elusive (Le Cornu, 2010).

Therefore at a deeper level, we consider that the best examples of discussions between the triad of mentor, tutor and student teacher have disrupted perceived hierarchical boundaries and moved towards reciprocal learning conversations within a genuine learning partnership. In making this assertion we revisit the partnership models proposed by Le Cornu and Ewing (2008) and in particular the conditions needed to move from a reflective practice paradigm to a learning communities approach. A feature of the learning communities model is that student teachers have time and space to engage in a range of learning relationships and that ‘such relationships are characterised by trust and reciprocity with a strong appreciation of the critical nature of professional conversations for ongoing professional learning’ (p.1803). In the best learning conversations there is evidence that tutors and mentors were not simply facilitating reflection but making steps, albeit sometimes tentatively, to shared learning and joint construction of what it means to teach (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the learning conversation model enabled the student teachers to ‘construct their own feedback utilising primary data rather than receiving feedback through the lens of another’ and in doing so destabilising the traditional power relationship between giver and receiver of feedback (Chateris and Smardon, 2013, p.172).

The learning conversation model also addresses the three elements Kruger et al (2009) identify as key to an effective and sustainable partnership, namely: a focus on learning; altered relationships and practices and new enabling structures. Kruger et al (*ibid*) also state that ‘an effective partnership leads all stakeholders to take on altered relationship practices. The relationships are exemplified by the presence of, and provision for, conversations among student teachers, mentor teachers and teacher educators.’ In this study all members of the triad engaged in a professional dialogue around the impact a teacher’s actions can have on individual pupils, the following quotation captures the essence of that discussion:

Collaborative video analysis provides a rich context in which teachers can develop such an approach to scrutiny of practice – through rendering implicit rationale, values and routine practices more explicit. The opportunities it affords for engagement in professional dialogue and scholarly analysis are highly valued by practitioners. (Hennessy and Deaney, 2009, p.634)

The discussion triads focus on evidence presented in a ‘concrete’, non-contestable form creating an environment where each member is empowered to contribute their own forms of knowledge to generate a shared understanding of practical and academic knowledge. Furthermore, video analysis is a particularly powerful tool for creating a dialogic space physically and emotionally removed from the busyness of classrooms and the ‘remoteness’ of a university campus. In this way the course of the discussions swiftly circumvented the culture and practices historically associated with ‘university tutor visits’ to an in-depth analysis of issues around pupil learning and the influence of theory on practice. By engineering a ‘dialogic space’ the learning conversation model not only disrupts the binary of school and faculty but disturbs the traditional hierarchies within the trichotomy of mentor, tutor and student teacher carving out ‘interactional spaces in which student teachers are positioned as contributors whose inputs are recognised and credited’ (Lipponen and Kampulainen, 2011) in this way the student teacher has the agency to direct professional dialogue and to ‘guide the eyes’ of the mentor and tutor.

Analysing the findings of the study through the lens of ‘third space’ theory adds depth to our understanding of the multi-layered potential of the ‘learning conversation’ model to disrupt traditional hierarchies of knowledge and to generate new modes of interaction at the intersection of school and university spaces. In particular, Gutierrez’s ‘collective third space’ offers a frame to conceptualise how the learning conversation model can expand learning opportunities. For example, in a traditional practicum lesson observation, the mentor and university tutor write a constructive critique of a lesson which serves as the script to guide the

student teacher's reflection on the lesson. Post-lesson discussions often start with the artifice of prompting the student teacher to share 'how they felt the lesson went' before the mentor and university tutor, inhabiting their evaluative as well as their developmental roles, skilfully guide the conversation to issues they judge most relevant to the student teacher's stage of development. In other words they manage the 'vertical' learning needed to ensure a student teacher progresses from an 'incompetent' to a 'competent' practitioner (Gutierrez, 2008). Using video capture as the vehicle for generating the agenda for the learning conversation offers a very different starting point for analysis and reflection of the lesson. The 'text' of the lesson that is offered by the video capture being not just a record of what happened, but a temporal space where the student teacher can review and reflect before sharing their reading and interpretation of the lesson. In this way the student teacher, with the mentor and university tutor, has the agency to begin to learn from a different kind of text which creates new and expanded opportunities for understanding the way classrooms work. In the example of Joe's learning conversation, it was not Joe ignoring Danny's request for help that was important but how Joe interrogated the incident and used it symbolically to explore his reactions in classrooms and how this incident might have turned out differently if he taken a different course of action. Therefore in this space different forms of knowledge are privileged and a student teacher is positioned as the 'guide' rather than the 'guided'. That is, in this collective third space, different forms of knowledge do not compete but rather are woven together to create a different reading of the fabric of the lesson and therefore offers an expanded form of learning for all members of the triad.

Conclusion

A strength of the current initial teacher education system in England is arguably the quality of partnership developed between colleagues in schools and universities over the past twenty

years. These mature partnerships are characterised by reciprocal relationships and an ongoing commitment to work collaboratively together to prepare teachers with the skills, knowledges and dispositions needed to teach well in contemporary and future classrooms. Although conditions are arguably in place for the development of more collegial and less hierarchical ways of working across and within partnerships, the complexities of contexts at every level of partnership make this a particularly challenging vision to realise. The long-term development of the partnership in this study has led to the evolution of a sophisticated understanding of the need for collaborative learning and reciprocal relationships amongst student teachers, mentors and tutors (Le Cornu and Ewing, 2008).

The advances achieved through this study coincided with a national policy commitment to teaching as a masters level profession (Furlong, 2009). Partner schools embraced this policy shift enthusiastically and across the partnership were numerous examples of teachers at different stages of their careers working collaboratively with each other, and with university tutors, on inquiry projects as part of masters level courses. The national and local context at that time was therefore conducive to developing a learning communities model of teacher education. A few years on and a very different policy landscape has emerged; the ambition for teaching to be a masters level profession has been quietly abandoned and the involvement of universities in teacher education repeatedly questioned (DfE, 2011). However, what this study demonstrates is how a mature partnership with a shared commitment and vision at an individual and institutional level can withstand the vagaries of national policy shifts to develop sustainable models of working in initial teacher education which challenge ‘the disconnect between the campus and school-based components of programs (Zeichner, 2010, p.89) and value dialogic spaces that engage ‘participants in schools and universities in new ways that emphasise collegiality, authenticity and reciprocity’ (Le Cornu, 2010, p. 204).

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