Perspectives in Education 2015: 33(1) *http://www.perspectives-in-education.com*
ISSN 0258-2236
© 2015 University of the Free State

Bridging theory and practice in teacher education: teaching schools – a bridge too far?

Sarah Gravett

Sarita Ramsaroop

The study reported on in this article stems from the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (2011). This framework proposes the establishment of teaching schools to strengthen teacher education. This article reports on a qualitative inquiry into the views of school-based personnel and the teacher education sector on the implementation of teaching schools as sites for teacher education and whether they think teaching schools could enhance the education of student-teachers. The inquiry showed that the participants were positive that teaching schools will enhance teacher education through serving as a bridge between the academic, university-based preparation of student-teachers and the practice demands of the teaching profession. However, they had no clear notion of how such schools could add value to teacher preparation differentiated to schools in which student-teachers are placed for work-integrated learning. We contend that, prior to establishing teaching schools, much deliberation between all stakeholders is required about the purpose and means of integrating teaching schools in teacher education. If not, teaching schools that serve to bridge the gap between the education of student-teachers at universities and the demands that novice teachers face once they enter the teaching profession might remain an elusive ideal.

Keywords: teacher education, training school, teaching school, finnish education, work-integrated learning, school practicum, theory-practice divide

Background and focus of the inquiry

The study on which this article is reporting stems from a document developed by the national departments in South Africa. The Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (hereafter referred to as

Sarah Gravett
University of Johannesburg
E-mail: sgravett@uj.ac.za
Telephone: 011 559 5234

Sarita Ramsaroop
University of Johannesburg
E-mail: Saritaram@uj.ac.za
Telephone: 011 559 2745

the Framework) endeavours to strengthen 'the teaching practice/school experience component of teacher education programmes through the development of Teaching Schools and Professional Practice Schools' (Department of Basic Education & Higher Education and Training, 2011: 17). This Framework describes teaching schools as 'teaching laboratories,' where students engage in learning-from-practice, for example, by observing best practice and participating in micro-teaching activities. Teaching schools can also serve as centres for research into strengthening teacher education. The Framework proposes that teaching schools are intended to be in close proximity to teacher education institutions to enable student-teachers to regularly gain access to authentic classroom sites. Furthermore, the Framework proposes that teachers at teaching schools be developed as mentors for student-teachers and be able to teach methodology courses within the formal teacher education curriculum. Professional practice schools, on the other hand, are viewed as schools where students go for work integrated learning (WIL). The Framework also proposes that teaching schools and professional practice schools play differentiated, complementary roles in the education of teachers. Students will engage with a specific school community over time at the former, and will learn to practise their craft in different schools in the latter.

Before the dissemination of the Framework document in 2011, the Faculty of Education at the University of Johannesburg (UJ), in partnership with the Gauteng Department of Education, founded a public school on its Soweto Campus in 2010. One of the objectives for establishing the school was to develop an integrated practice site for the pre-service education of teachers. It was also established as a site for longitudinal child development studies and research on children's performance in the school curriculum. Based on the work UJ had already done at its school, the Department of Higher Education and Training, supported by European Union funding, commissioned researchers from the education faculty to conduct research on establishing teaching schools in South Africa. The unit of analysis (Mouton, 1996) was specific role players in teacher education (described in the 'methods' section of this article). The inquiry was guided by this research question: 'What are the views of school teachers, school management teams and the teacher education sector on the proposed establishment of teaching schools at South African teacher education institutions?'

This article reports on one component of this research: the views of certain stakeholders on the introduction of these schools in South Africa and whether they think that teaching schools could enhance the education of student-teachers for the teaching profession.

In the remainder of the article, we will discuss some of the literature on the role of schools in other teacher education systems. We then briefly present the inquiry and discuss the findings in depth, drawing the conclusion that participants, while generally supportive of the endeavour, had no clear notion of how such schools

could add value to teacher preparation, probably because they had not encountered them in practice as yet.

Collaboration between schools and universities in teacher education

Collaboration between schools and teacher education institutions in the preparation of teachers is prevalent in education systems. The model that is widely used is to place student-teachers at selected schools for the practicum component of the teacher education programme. However, the extent to which schools become partners differs from country to country and also within countries. We discuss the systems of three countries where schools play a prominent role in the education of teachers.

In the US, many teacher education institutions have partnered with school districts to create professional development schools, aimed at providing quality education for pre-service teachers (Mule, 2006). The delivery of teacher education programmes is the function of both university lecturers and senior teachers in these schools. The focus is on producing professional teachers who 'learn from teaching rather than who has finished learning how to teach' (Darling-Hammond, 2008: 94).

Recently, England has pursued a school-based model of initial teacher education, seemingly to minimise university involvement, driven by the political conviction that the school is the most effective place for learning how to teach (McNamara, Murray & Jones, 2014). In 2010 the Secretary of State for Education in England announced the intention to shift teacher education and continuing professional development of teachers from universities to schools, led by the newly established teaching schools (Whitehead, 2011). The vision was to establish 500 teaching school alliances by 2014-15. A teaching school alliance comprises 25 or more schools, strategic partners, such as higher education institutions, and other interested organisations (Matthews & Berwick, 2013). Teaching schools are tasked with identifying, demonstrating and sharing best practice within each alliance.

The shift to school-led teacher education is even more pronounced in the School Direct Initiative (McNamara et al., 2014). This is a market-driven model where schools recruit and train pre-service teachers with a view of providing them with employment. Schools in this model are expected to train pre-service teachers in areas of professional development and subject knowledge. Training is conducted in collaboration with a service provider of choice, which could be a university.

Finland's teacher education model is based on a full partnership between universities and teacher training schools, also referred to as normal schools or practice schools. Sahlberg (2012: 12) describes Finnish teacher education as a 'spiral sequence of theoretical knowledge, practical training and research-oriented enquiry for teaching'. The bulk of student-teachers' practice teaching takes place in training schools (Kansanen, 2014). Even though these schools are governed by universities, they follow the same curriculum as other public schools. Research-based thinking integrates theoretical and practice-based aspects during teacher education studies

(Kansanen, 2014). This is achieved by aligning teaching practice sessions in training schools with theoretical studies that directly relate to the focus of that practice period (Kansanen, 2014). In so doing, pre-service teachers practice teaching and practitioner research simultaneously (Kansanen, 2014). In addition to being placed in training schools, student-teachers are placed in a network of selected field schools for practice teaching (Sahlberg, 2012).

With student-teachers' first practice experience occurring at training schools, observation of and involvement in best practice is ensured. This is made possible by appointing staff at these schools that meet higher professional requirements than ordinary municipal schools, with proven competence in teaching skills, supervision, teacher professional development and assessment strategies (Sahlberg, 2012). Teaching school teachers not only guide and mentor student-teachers (Kansanen, 2014), they also conduct research in collaboration with the university to contribute to the development of teacher education (Sahlberg, 2012). These roles require mentor teachers to continuously improve their expertise in their field. Mentor teachers are required to complete courses in pedagogics and to undergo continuous supervisor training (Jussila & Saari, 2000).

Research methods

Merriam (2009: 22) terms a qualitative study that does not fit any specific design genre as a 'generic qualitative inquiry'. The research we conducted falls into this combination of qualitative methods, which were used for the purpose of inquiring into the views of a variety of role players pertaining to teaching schools and whether such schools could enhance teacher education. These role players included school-based personnel and the teacher education sector. In so doing, rich descriptions of the 'perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments, presuppositions' (van Manen, 1977, in Miles & Huberman, 1994: 10) regarding the establishment of teaching schools could be elicited, allowing the researchers to build a 'complex, holistic picture' (Creswell, 1998: 15) of the participants' views.

A combination of purposive and convenient sampling was used to select 'desirable participants' (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004: 71). Six teacher education institutions (universities and universities of technology) were selected to participate in the research. The main criterion for selecting the sample was to aim for maximum variation. Therefore, rural and urban teacher education institutions were included. Another criterion for inclusion was that the institutions had to offer both primary and secondary school initial teacher education. At these institutions, heads of teacher education (in some cases deans) were requested to participate. They invited teacher educators (n=59). The teacher education institutions also identified one or two schools (n=10) in close proximity to the institution. Principals (n=10) of the selected schools invited teachers (n=168) in their schools and school management teams (n=32) to form part of the inquiry.

Prior to data collection an information session was held on teaching schools as presented in the Framework. The information as stated in the Framework was presented.

Three methods of data collection were used. Semi-structured (open-ended) questionnaires, requiring written responses, were used in the case of school teachers, school management teams and teacher educators. On completion of the questionnaires, these participants reconvened and were asked to raise issues that emanated from completing the questionnaire. The purpose of this was to ascertain what the most pertinent issues were from the perspective of participants. This was video recorded. This also served as a reliability measure of the inquiry and was a form of 'member checking' (Merriam, 2009).

Semi-structured interviews, using an interview schedule, were conducted with principals and heads of teacher education. Questions that were asked were similar to the questions used in the questionnaires, but allowed for more detailed responses and also for more in-depth probing. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

The data were analysed using qualitative content analysis, as described by Henning et al. (2004: chapter 6). We firstly read through the whole data set to familiarise ourselves with it. In this process 'big' ideas from the data were noted. Thereafter we divided the data into five sets to reflect the participant groupings. Each data set was analysed by using open coding, that is, through identifying units of meaning and labelling these. This was followed by categorising, which implied that related codes were grouped and named. The categories from the different sets of data were combined conceptually into: (1) across data-set categories and (2) themes (with sub-themes), resulting in final 'thematic patterns' (Henning et al., 2004: 106).

Findings: participants are positive, yet uninformed

The overarching theme derived from the data is: 'Teaching schools will enhance teacher education through serving as a bridge between the academic university-based preparation of student-teachers and the practice demands of the teaching profession.' The belief that there is a gap between the education of student-teachers at universities and the realities that novice teachers face once they enter the teaching profession is inherent to this finding. Sub-themes relate to teaching schools bridging the gap.

4.1 Bridging the gap through student-teachers observing a good practice example of school life

University and school-based participant groups viewed teaching schools as sites for student-teachers to observe best teaching practice, assuming that this would be what they would encounter. Teachers mentioned that schools would

'familiarize students with teaching and good teaching practice' by giving 'student-teachers longer time in teaching schools to be exposed to different challenges that are practically happening'. Deans and school principals concurred that teaching schools can contribute to improving student-teachers' pedagogical craft and their curriculum content knowledge. By observing different grades they would develop their pedagogical content knowledge.

School-based participants, including school managers and teachers, agreed that novice teachers who enter the profession lack work-based knowledge and skills derived from apprenticeship experiences. They said that through regular observation and on-site experience, in a school they have come to know well, student-teachers would/could develop an understanding of the way a school functions. This could contribute to developing student-teachers holistically as they 'get more exposed to reality when you are a teacher with an administrative load and who has the pressure to get the best possible results from learners who also come from houses where there are numerous problems'. According to teacher educators and teachers, student-teachers will be 'groomed as professionals' by observing teachers who are good role models and who embody the different roles and expectations of a teacher: student-teachers 'develop a teacher identity'.

4.2 Bridging the gap through student-teachers experiencing the 'real practice of what is happening in schools'

School-based participants were of the view that there is a 'gap between what universities offer to students and the real practice of what is happening in schools'. Teachers 'accused' universities of imparting 'inligting wat nie van toepassing is op wat werklik in die onderwys gebeur nie' (information that is not relevant to what is really happening in schools), resulting in students who 'stap met baie boekekennis en weinig praktiese ondervinding' (walk with lots of book knowledge, but little practical experience). The school management teams also mentioned that university lecturers are often not in touch with school practice and do not always know what is relevant: 'dosente is te lank uit die praktyk en weet nie aldag wat relevant is nie' (lecturers have been out of practice for too long and don't always not what is relevant).

The notion that teacher education is often too theoretical was mentioned by all participant groups. A dean admitted: 'we focus very much on the theory, and we don't really focus on what is actually changing and happening in the classroom … schools have changed; the dynamics of the school population have changed and that requires a complete different way … to approach things'.

Generally, the participants said that the disjuncture between school and university expectations results in concerns about the quality of teachers emerging from universities. The concerns from teachers include 'students who start their teaching careers struggling with curriculum content'. School principals added that student-teachers 'do not know how to do preparation that is valuable to teaching'.

All role players were confident that teaching schools could serve to 'bridge the gap between theory and practice'. Teachers indicated that teaching schools could provide opportunities to 'implement theory in practice' by 'establishing a link between the theory done at university to practice done at schools thereby making learning 'real and relevant'. Teachers added that teaching schools can 'fill up the gap between university curriculum and school curriculum'.

Teachers mentioned that student-teachers who are placed in teaching schools would be exposed to 'realistic and relevant practical classroom experiences' and would 'observe different approaches to resolving authentic issues,' which may 'allay their fears in the teaching profession'. Such experiences might allow student-teachers to 'identify the authenticity of the theoretical material that the student-teachers are using given the current system which leaves a gap between the provision of solutions in terms of practical issues like discipline, poor parental involvement as a result of illiteracy, [and] poor background'.

A dean expressed a similar notion: if 'they have just been trained in the university they are trained in the academic sense, but by *joining forces with schools* as teaching schools I think they would get a more professional flavour of teacher training, as medical doctors are getting'.

Some teachers also proposed that the time student-teachers spend on practical experience be increased with more time spent at school, resulting in 'more practical than theory' and that 'practice should be direct and not after theory' as 'this does away with forgetting what has been taught'. Such an approach will fill the 'gap between what the universities offer students and the real practice of what is happening in schools' and 'form a link between university and schools'.

4.3 Bridging the gap through a collaborative relationship

For teaching schools to be used optimally a collaborative relationship between the different role players has to be fostered. All parties agreed that university teacher educators and mentor teachers have to be equally committed and need to view the role of the other as equal. A dean claimed that 'teachers have knowledge and practical experience far more than anyone else can wish for … I think it will be an equal relationship'. Teachers said that 'teaching school staff come with practical experience while university teaching education staff come up with methodology and the two will help the student-teacher in totality. It will be a collaboration of experience and methodology' and 'we should be seen as equals'.

Towards achieving an equal partnership, continuous communication about course content and the student-teachers' progress and development is needed. Regular consultations between teaching school teachers and teacher educators can result in a 'marriage between theory and practice'.

Bridging the gap: a bridge too far?

It is important to note that most of the research participants do not have any experience of teaching schools. They do not know such schools empirically. Thus, their responses are based on their conceptions of a construct. We expected that participants' responses would be speculative, which was generally not the case. We found this surprising, but realised that participants' responses reflected their views on current practices related to school practicum and how these could benefit from placing students in a controlled school environment, which they assume a teaching school would be. Even though the research aimed to elicit the participants' views on a new type of school that will work in tandem with universities in the education of student teachers, their responses reflected their views of the current practice of placing students in schools for WIL. Participants did not talk about teaching schools playing a fundamentally different role in the education of student teachers than schools currently do. Undoubtedly, before establishing teaching schools in South Africa, much deliberation is required in the teacher education sector about the purpose of integrating teaching schools in teacher education. How will the role of the teaching school differ from the role of the professional practice school? How will the experiences of student-teachers in these schools be planned to contribute differently but complementarily to the education of student-teachers? How should teacher education be planned with teaching schools in mind? These are important considerations which the participants were not able to fully grasp yet because of the novelty of the construct.

Participants were silent on whether the integration of teaching schools into teacher education would have an impact on teacher education curricula and models. This implies that teaching schools run the risk of becoming add-ons. We argue that none of the proposed benefits of the teaching school, as a 'bridge,' would be realised unless teacher education programmes are developed with the teaching school as integral to the programme design.

The notion that there is a gap between the education of student-teachers at universities and the demands of teaching is prominent in the data. Teachers and teacher educators said that they contribute different kinds of knowledge to the education of student-teachers. These are typified as theoretical knowledge versus practical knowledge, suggesting that the knowledge types remain largely distinct. Binary ways of thinking about knowledge and about the theory–practice dichotomy is a perennial issue in teacher education (McNarama, Jones & Murray, 2014). In addition, possible approaches to bridging the dichotomy abound in the teacher education literature (Korthagen, 2011).

Participants in this research propose that teaching schools could bridge the gap. For some the potential lies in teaching schools enabling student-teachers to spend time in a model school environment, which will result in teachers who are better prepared for the complexities of teaching. This view informs teacher education

reforms in some countries where school-based teacher education is introduced to overcome the fierce criticism that teacher education is not sufficiently relevant to practice. An example of this is the push in England to moving teacher education away from higher education into schools. The Secretary of State for Education announced in 2010 that initial teacher education should be mainly school based. He views teaching as 'a craft which is best learnt as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman' (McNarama et al., 2014).

But, will more observation time in a school, even a model school, equate with enhanced preparation for the teaching profession? We think not.

We concur that observing exemplary practice is powerful. Student-teachers observing expert teachers at work can learn much about pedagogical skills related to teaching strategies and classroom management. But, as the study of Orland-Barak and Leshem (2009) shows, student-teachers often attribute little learning value to the observation in schools. Their observations remain on a concrete, perceptual level, which prevents them from making connections at a conceptual level. Without scaffolding, student-teachers struggle 'to see beyond'. Observation tasks must be designed purposefully for student-teachers so that they will elicit dialogue that will help student-teachers to 'distinguish the learning potential intrinsic in the multidimensional, simultaneous, immediate and unpredictable teaching reality' (Orland-Barak & Leshem, 2009: 33).

We agree with Derry that, placing individuals in a rich environment, does not ensure learning. Derry (2008: 60-61) points out that the 'learning environment must be designed and [learning] cannot rely on the spontaneous response to an environment which is not constructed according to, or involves, some clearly worked out conceptual framework'.

We argue that teaching schools and universities should intentionally co-design the teaching school as a 'learning place' (Conway, Murphy & Rutherford, 2014) for student-teachers. Furthermore, we agree with Shulman (2004) that experience does not necessarily lead to 'wisdom of practice'. Learning through experience requires reflection on experience. The ultimate goal of educating teachers is to teach them to act with understanding (Feiman-Nemser & Buchman, 1985). Student-teachers who encounter 'doing' in the teaching school need help in seeing how understanding clarifies and shapes ways of doing. In teaching schools this means that student-teachers should be guided by knowledgeable mentors 'to structure or restructure an experience, a problem, or existing knowledge or insights' (Korthagen, 2001: 58) to enhance understanding.

Another reason why the involvement of student-teachers in the teaching school will not necessarily address the gap is that the incorporation of a teaching school results in the education of student-teachers occurring simultaneously at two sites. A disjuncture between coursework learning and teaching school learning, if not

mediated, could actually serve to broaden the gap that the teaching school is supposed to bridge. A way to counteract this is to plan for the conceptual connectedness of university learning and teaching school learning with regard to, inter alia, a shared understanding of learners and learning, the role of the teacher, and the mission of schooling. A shared vision is key between the university and teaching school (as complementary teacher education sites) about the kind of teacher the programme envisages (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Zeichner and Conklin (2008: 272), who studied exemplary teacher education programmes in the United States, highlight the centrality of a uniting vision in such programmes:

> *The case studies suggest that it is the guiding ideas of a program that are likely to have the most influence on what prospective teachers learn and suggest that the more coherent a program is with regard to the ideas about teaching and learning and schooling that underlie it, the more powerful the influence is likely to be. The cases as a group suggest that program impact is strengthened by a clear and common vision of teaching and learning that permeates all coursework and field experiences.*

This implies that a close working relationship between university teachers and teaching school mentors is vital. The research conducted by Gravett, Petersen and Petker (2014) in the teaching school linked to the UJ also attests to this. They argue that student-teachers' coursework and teaching school learning should work in tandem. A discursive understanding is needed between school teachers and university teachers of the issues and questions that student-teachers will examine in the school, 'when they are to be studied, what activities are to be engaged in, what kinds of questions are to be asked, and what kinds of criteria are to be applied' (McIntyre, 1995: 371). A discursive understanding implies dialogue, but does not assume full convergence of views between what student-teachers encounter at the teaching school and in their coursework.

Some research participants view teaching schools as sites for implementing theory in practice, thereby bridging the gap. For others, the teaching school provides an authentic environment to 'test' theoretical material student-teachers encounter at the university. For the latter, the teaching school serves as a site of 'applying received knowledge' (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999: 257) to practical situations through implementing, translating, using, adapting and/or putting into practice what they learn in coursework. This 'theory-into-practice' view is well-entrenched in teacher education (Korthagen, 2011).

The problem with this view is that theoretical knowledge and practice knowledge remain separate, the theory-practice binary is reaffirmed. Thus, we doubt whether a teaching school could bridge the gap if this view were to be implicit to the approach of a teacher education programme. So, what are alternative conceptualisations and what would the role of a teaching school be in them?

Kessels and Korthagen (2001) contend that a phronesis, or practical wisdom approach to teacher education, resolves the theory-practice disjuncture. Phronesis

focuses on the development of practical reasoning or perception-based knowledge. We are of the view that teacher education incorporating a teaching school sits comfortably with our conceptualisation of the phronesis approach (Gravett, 2012). In essence, phronesis that incorporates a teaching school would imply that student-teachers mainly engage in a form of experiential learning stimulated by 'concerns' encountered at the teaching school. Reflection, guided by teaching school and university teachers, serve to structure the teaching school experience. This is done through clarifying, classifying, extracting core ideas and principles, making tentative generalisations through extrapolation and incorporating conceptual knowledge. Personal theorising forms the foundation for moving to 'formal' conceptual knowledge.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) also dispute the theory-into-practice relationship. They do this through their 'knowledge of practice' conception of teacher learning and the concomitant 'inquiry as stance' construct for understanding teacher learning. They note that the term 'practice' is often equated with that which is practical – 'to refer to doing, acting, carrying out, and/or performing the work of the profession' (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999: 290). From the perspective of inquiry as stance, however, 'neither the activity of teaching nor inquiry about teaching are captured by the notion that practice is practical. Rather, teaching and thus teacher learning are centrally about forming and re-forming frameworks for understanding practice' (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999: 290).

We argue that teacher education programmes should be designed so that both the university and teaching school serve as sites for the 'intentional investigation of practice' (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999: 250). At these sites questions that function as 'lenses for seeing and making sense of practice' (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999: 292) should be considered, at the university more broadly and at the teaching school within the context of school life. Questions such as the following could be used to guide student-teachers to challenge their own assumptions and to identify and question salient issues of practice: Who am I as a developing teacher? What are my assumptions about learners? What sense are learners making of what is going on in the classroom? How do the views, frameworks and research of others inform or challenge my own understandings? What are the underlying assumptions of the materials, texts, tests and curriculum frameworks with which I engage? What am I trying to accomplish here and why? How do my thinking and actions connect to larger education issues and agendas? How do my experiences in the programme contribute to my own developing educational theory?

We also find the concept of 'third space' (McNamara, Jones & Murray, 2014) enlightening when thinking about the role that teaching schools could play as a bridge to resolve the theory-practice dilemma. According to Zeichner (2010), third spaces:

> *involve a rejection of binaries such as practitioner and academic knowledge and theory and practice and involve the integration of what are often seen as competing discourses in new ways—an either/or perspective is transformed into a both/also point of view.*

Kozleski (2011: 257) describes the power of being together in third space as meaning 'that we suspend assumptions about being right and take the time to consider and explore the unfamiliar, question, and above all, listen to one another and possibly, silence the shrill critic within us all'.

Even though some research participants suggest that theoretical knowledge belongs to the realm of the university, third space thinking does not locate theoretical knowledge with the university and practice knowledge with the teaching school. To us, third space thinking means that staff from both the teaching school and university 'journey out of their own organizational and professional territories and … combine their respective skills, knowledge and expertise in new ways' (Gravett *et al*., 2014: S115).

Teaching school teachers must be able to move comfortably between the world of school practice and of educational ideas so as to introduce applicable conceptual knowledge when mentoring student-teachers. This is done at training schools in Finland. Teachers at these schools underwent teacher education that is research-based, implying 'systematic integration of scientific educational knowledge, didactics (or pedagogical content knowledge), and practice in a manner that enables teachers to enhance their pedagogical thinking, evidence-based decision making, and engagement in the scientific community of educators' (Sahlberg, 2012: 7). In Finland all teachers are educated in this way. This is not the case in South Africa. However, we argue that teaching school teachers would have to be involved in this type of development to prepare them for their role as mentors.

Conversely, it is crucial that university teachers incorporate student-teachers' experiences at the teaching school in coursework. We concur with Korthagen (2011) that, if student-teachers have not encountered concrete problems or concerns about teaching, it is highly unlikely that they will perceive the usefulness of the conceptual knowledge of education as field. Dialogue about what student-teachers observe and experience in the teaching school could serve as powerful springboards for introducing related conceptual knowledge in the coursework component of the programme.

Third space thinking brings binary discourses together. This does not mean that there is no difference between the role of the university and the teaching school in teacher education. The university and teaching school contribute in different but complementary ways to the education of student-teachers. Hirst (1990, in McIntyre, 1995) contends that mentor teachers possess authoritative situational knowledge specific to the school context. McIntyre (1995: 372) adds that experienced teachers have accumulated over the years 'a vast body of professional knowledge highly relevant

to initial teacher education'. Furlong, McNamara, Campbell, Howson and Lewis (2008: 41) argue that a key function of the university is 'theorising the epistemological and pedagogical underpinnings' of the teaching profession. In the absence of such theorising the 'complexity and contestability of professional knowledge is no longer seen to be at the heart of what partnership is about. Professional knowledge becomes simplified, flattened, it is essentially about contemporary practice in schools'.

Synchronising the complementary roles of teaching schools and universities requires the equal valuing of theory-based and experience-based knowledge (Koppich, 2000). Researchers at universities working closely with schools in initial teacher education indicate that breaking the hierarchical chain between teacher educators and school mentors is possible through university lecturers' respecting the professional commitment, research ability and the capacity of teachers to create knowledge (Whitehead, 2011).

Conclusion

This inquiry showed that the participants were positive that teaching schools as envisaged in the Framework will enhance teacher education through serving as a bridge between the academic university-based preparation of student-teachers and the practice demands of the teaching profession. However, they had no clear notion of how such schools could add value to teacher preparation, complementary to schools in which student-teachers are placed for work integrated learning. We contend that, prior to establishing teaching schools in South Africa, much deliberation involving all stakeholders is required about the purpose of integrating teaching schools in teacher education. If not, teaching schools serving to bridge the gap between the education of student-teachers at universities and the demands that novice teachers face once they enter the teaching profession might remain an elusive ideal – a bridge too far.

Acknowledgements: The research was supported by the Department of Higher Education and Training with a European Union Grant. Data for the broader project was collected by a team consisting of Sarita Ramsaroop, Nadine Petersen, Gerda Bender, Kakoma Luneta, Pierre du Plessis, Coert Loock, Senoelo Nkhase and Dirk Postma.

References

Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S.L. 1999. Relationships of knowledge and practice: teacher learning in communities. *Review of Research in Education*, 24: 249-305.

Conway, P.F., Murphy, R. & Rutherford, V. 2014. 'Learningplace' Practices and pre-service teacher education in Ireland: knowledge generation, partnerships and pedagogy. In: O McNamara, J Murray & M Jones (eds). *Workplace learning in teacher education. international practice and policy.* London: Springer. pp. 221-242.

Creswell, J.W. 1998. *Qualitative inquiry and research design. Choosing among five traditions.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Darling-Hammond, L. 2008. Teacher learning that supports student learning. In: BZ Presseisen (ed.). *Teaching for intelligence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Department of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training. 2011. Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa. Pretoria. South Africa.

Derry, J. 2008. Abstract rationality in education: from Vygotsky to Brandom. *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, 27: 49-62.

Feiman-Nemser, S. 2001. From preparation to practice: designing a continuum to strengthen and sustain teaching. *Teachers College Record*, 103(6): 1013-1055.

Feiman-Nemser, S. & Buchman, M. 1985. Pitfalls of experience in teacher preparation. *Teachers College Record*, 87(1): 53-65.

Furlong, J., McNamara, O., Campbell, A., Howson, J. & Lewis, S. 2008. Partnership, policy and politics: initial teacher education in England under new labour. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 14(4): 307-318.

Gravett, S. 2012. Crossing the 'theory-practice divide': learning to be(come) a teacher. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 2(2): 1-14.

Gravett, S., Petersen, N. & Petker, G. 2014. Integrating foundation phase teacher education with a 'teaching school' at the University of Johannesburg. *Education as Change: Journal of Curriculum Research*, 18(1): S107-S119.

Henning, E., Van Rensburg, W.A. & Smit, B. 2004. *Finding your way in qualitative research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Jussila, J. & Saari, S. 2000. Teacher Education as a Future Moulding Factor, International Evaluation of Teacher Education in Finnish Universities. Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, Helsinki, Finland.

Kansanen, P. 2014. Teaching as a master's level profession in Finland: Theoretical reflections and practical solutions. In: O McNamara, J Murray & M Jones (eds). *Workplace learning in teacher education. International practice and policy.* London: Springer. pp. 279-292.

Kessels, J. & Korthagen, F.A.J. 2001. The relation between theory and practice: back to the classics. In: FAJ Korthagen (eds). *Linking practice and theory. The pedagogy of realistic teacher education*. New Jersey, London: Taylor & Francis. pp. 20-31.

Koppich, J.E. 2000. Trinity University: preparing teachers for tomorrow's schools. In: L Darling-Hammond (ed.). *Studies of excellence in teacher education*. USA: AACTE Publications. pp. 1-48.

Korthagen, F.A.J. 2001. Linking practice and theory: the pedagogy of realistic teacher education. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, April 2001.

Korthagen, F.A.J. 2011. Making teacher education relevant for practice: the pedagogy of realistic teacher education. *Orbis Scholae*, 5(2): 31-50.

Kozleski, E. 2011. Dialectical practices in education: creating third space in the education of teachers. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 34(3): 250-259.

Matthews, P. & Berwick, G. 2013. *Teaching schools: first among equals?* Nottingham: National College for Teaching and Leadership.

McIntyre, D. 1995. Initial teacher education as practical theorising: a response to Paul Hirst. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 43(4): 365-383.

McNamara, O., Jones, M. & Murray, J. 2014. Framing workplace learning. In: O McNamara, J Murray & M Jones (eds). *Workplace learning in teacher education. International practice and policy*. London: Springer. pp. 1-28.

McNamara, O., Murray, J. & Jones, M. 2014. Workplace learning in pre-service teacher education: an English case study. In O McNamara, J Murray & M Jones (eds). *Workplace learning in teacher education. International practice and policy.* London: Springer. pp. 183-206.

Merriam, S.B. 2009. *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* Revised and expanded from Case Study Research in Education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, B.M. & Huberman, A.M. 1994. *Qualitative data analysis*. California, USA: Sage.

Mouton, J. 1996. *Understanding social research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Mule, L. 2006. Preservice teachers' inquiry in a professional development school context: implications for the practicum. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22: 205-218.

Orland-Barak, L. & Lesham, S. 2009. Observation in learning to teach: forms of 'seeing'. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 36(3): 21-37.

Sahlberg, P. 2012. The most wanted. Teachers and teacher education in Finland. In: L Darling-Hammond & A Lieberman (eds). *Teacher education around the world. Changing policies and practices.* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. pp. 1-21.

Shulman, L. 2004. The wisdom of practice. Essays on teaching, learning and learning to teach. (Edited by SM Wilson). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Whitehead, J. 2011. Teacher education in England: the changing landscape and key drivers behind the reforms. In: J Murray & J Wishart (eds). *Teacher education: the changing landscape across the UK*. Bristol: ESCalate. pp. 27-35.

Zeichner, K. 2010. Rethinking the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college- and university-based teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education,* 61(1-2): 89-99.

Zeichner, K. & Conklin, H.G. 2008. Teacher education programs as sites for teacher preparation. In M Cochran-Smith, S Feiman-Nemser, DJ McIntyre & KE Demers (eds). *Handbook of research on teacher education: enduring questions in changing contexts*. New York: Routledge. pp. 269-289.