**A SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION ON THE PROMOTION OF A *SIGNATURE PEDAGOGY* OF PARTNERSHIP IN THE INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION CONTEXT AT LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY**

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**Abstract.** In this presentation I argue that collaborative learning across boundaries involving academics, teachers, ‘experts’ and students is integral to good quality teacher education. Here a *signature pedagogy* of Partnership Learning *to Learn* is offered that represents a paradigm shift in thinking about teacher learning at Liverpool Hope University, repositioning the focus of learning from content to concepts and towards a vision in which key learning dispositions and capacities are fore grounded for ALL involved. Underpinning this pedagogy is the notion of productive inquiry, informed by a distinct set of beliefs and values. The affordances and constraints of the developing ITE pedagogy and architectural design in which a willingness to engage in, persist with and comprehend challenging tasks and concepts in an‘uncomfortable time of uncertainty’, is one which is elaborated here. Key partnership practices and learning designs are identified that promote the learning dispositions and capacities characteristic of effective teachers in the 21st Century.

**Keywords**

Initial teacher education, collaborative learning, transformational learning, partnership, signature pedagogy

**Background**

As a university academic I have significant experience of working co-operatively and in collaboration with practitioners and professionals from a variety of organisational settings. I take the view that both intra and inter-organisational collaboration is a precondition for effective ‘knowledge exchange’ and ‘knowledge creation’ within and across organizations (Rush and Diamond, 2009). I also argue that most of the challenges we face in the twenty-first century demand that we adopt multi-disciplinary and multi-professional ways of working (Claxton, 2006; Field, 2005; Fisher and Rush 2008; Whitchurch, 2008a). Furthermore, I believe that both intra and inter-organisational collaboration calls into question existing ways of working, of decision making, and demands an explicit examination of the organizational structure and the basis on which leadership is perceived (Karlsson et al 2008; Whitchurch 2008a).

Reports from various organisations, including AIM (2006) and The Work Foundation (2008) highlight how collaboration is viewed as a critical competence for organisations. However, the process of collaboration is often messy, not clearly defined, difficult to manage and often reactive to unplanned events or actions. It can lead to beneficial results i.e. collaborative advantage. But progress can often be slow, leading towards collaborative inertia. A current research project into the “New Professional” at Liverpool Hope University recognises that our existing collaborative relationships are not unproblematic, reflecting many of the concerns outlined above. Of particular concern, is that current practices are not fully aligned to our vision of the role of ITE at Hope for the 21st Century. Central to this vision is a recognition of the need to develop a professionalism that allows students to relate to other professions in an effective way and engage in inter-professional activity in the context of the integrated children’s workforce. In reality, with most of our collaborative relationships the University (academic) is viewed as the primary collaborator/partner, and, whilst relationships are symbiotic, the ‘power’ tends to flow one way. Further concerns are to do with the transparency of partnership agreements (including clear rationale, roles and responsibilities), capability (involving appropriate training and development), and ownership (linked to one’s sense of being central to, and, having some control over, the ways in which the partnership has evolved). Such concerns bring into sharp relief the interface between the University, and other professionals and organisations, in supporting the development of subject knowledge for teachers and, ultimately, the wellbeing of the child.

Integral to the leadership style adopted towards the reconceptualising or reimagining of partnership practices at LHU has been the foregrounding of beliefs and values, locating the changes within an intellectual and conceptual context and setting out a vision and inviting discussion. Bryman (2007) and Nailon et al (2007) suggest defining and articulating a vision based upon values and beliefs does require a high degree of intellectual and personal honesty - not just about your beliefs but a willingness to be held account if you do not meet them. In a real sense, a key characteristic of leadership here is one of being very explicit about understanding the context within which the change is taking place as well as "owning" the nature of the change. Debate on the developing model is being encouraged within a clearly defined framework emerging from related research that I have been involved with during the last 10 years.

**Introduction**

What this paper is seeking to share with you is how as Vice Dean with responsibility for Teacher Education at Liverpool Hope University I have started the process of reconceptualising or reimagining our partnership practices. In self-examining and critically reflecting on my position and role towards the reconceptualisation of partnership practices, key features of a *signature pedagogy* of Partnership Learning *to Learn* are being modelled: reflective, intentional, collaborative. As argued by many my practice will be improved through systematic reflection. But, an equally important purpose for sharing such a level and depth of reflection is to create a learning experience through which changes in beliefs, values and related practice(s) can be brought about in others. Here, the “…analytic self is abandoned towards approaching questions of epistemology, action etc from the perspective of ‘myself within this context” (Cook and Brown, 1999, p. 64). Such thinking is akin to Action Research and is encapsulated in Whitehead’s notion of ‘Living Theory’. Whitehead (2008) explains how “A Living theory” is an explanation produced by an individual for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation in which they live and work” (2008, p. 104). Such a methodological approach and associated methods appeals to me.

In this paper I reflect on the competing and (at times) contradictory pressures on those who occupy leadership roles. More specifically, attention is paid to how, in my capacity as Vice Dean I have sought to promote, facilitate and lead change on prevailing partnership practices in Teacher Education linked my vision for the Faculty of Education in which I work (see extract below):

*“More and more, we have to find ways to work across the disciplines/specialist areas of knowledge and professions. That’s a major challenge to us. We have organizational barriers (e.g. Quality Assurance mechanisms), cultural barriers (e.g. tutors protective of their specialist area of interest and seeing it as distinctive and/or more important than others – silo mentality) to that of, financial barriers (e.g. funding linked to student numbers). Of particular importance here is the role of Heads of Department and Programme Leaders as ‘boundary spanners’ and time being set aside for those involved in curriculum design to have sustained conversations with one another concerning innovative intra and inter-organisational collaboration, linked to the needs of our community both locally, regionally and internationally.”* (Rush, L., December 2009)

Encapsulated in this vision is acommitment to a model of Teacher Education, which uses the expertise and professionalism of individuals wherever these exist. Crucially, here, is the centrality of what is being termed ‘Partnership Learning *to Learn’* - reflective, intentional and collaborative learning created through academic activities and practices in the University; the professional knowledge and skills of other professionals in school or other settings; and the fusion of these through programmes of Teacher Education.

In this paper I argue that intra and inter-professional learning *to learn* across boundaries is integral to good quality teacher education. The paper acknowledges that the quality of relations and learning associated with such a distinct approach to partnership is contingent upon a particular culture and set of values and practices, and model of leadership. The overarching aim of this paper is to provide a clear rationale and systematic reflection on my decision to embed and enact Learning to Learn (L2L) towards the promotion of such a *signature pedagogy* of partnership. Related objectives are to: (1) identify key characteristics and related epistemological beliefs associated with existing collaborative practices; (2) offer a meaningful representation of reconceptualised practice in terms of Partnership Learning *to learn*; and (3) set out key points for consideration towards successful implementation of the vision

**Pedagogies associated with teacher learning**

Previous research by myself and colleagues has adopted a phenomenographic approach to investigate the the promotion of subject knowledge in Liverpool Hope University’s ITE partnership (Rush, Hathaway and Walton, 2010; Hathaway, Rush *et al*., 2010). Phenomenography was used as an analytical tool to explore the understandings of the phenomenon (i.e. promotion of subject knowledge of teaching) from the perspective of trainee teachers, academics and professional mentors. The non-dualistic relationship under examination refers to what the person understands about the world they are living in, with the world and its phenomena being constituted through experience (Marton and Booth, 1987). Experiencing the world in different ways relates to what we notice during the process of learning or experiencing, thus leading to differences in ways of understanding, which can range from the less to the more sophisticated (Åkerlind, 2002).

A range of ways of understanding the phenomenon, the promotion of subject knowledge emerged as three hierarchically inclusive pedagogies associated with teacher learning and initial professional development: teacher *replication in practice*; teacher *formation*; and teacher *transformation*. These pedagogies revealed that our ITE partnership contained an inherent set of barriers to learning, with affordances and constraints that were present as a function of both the agents and the environment through their interactions (Greeno, 1994). Teacher learning and the professional relationships associated with each of these pedagogies varied in the following ways:

* *Teacher replication in practice*, here teachers adopt a predominately surface approach to learning revealing dualist notions of knowledge and knowing. Students are receivers of information, from their academic and professional mentors leading to a mimicking of current practice. In turn mentors over-emphasise observation as the principal method of learning in school.
* *Teacher formation*, here learning is oriented towards the experiential dimension, using trial and error as a strategy to improve practice. Learning is bounded within a system regulated by ‘experts’, the professional mentors and academics who validate best practice through feedback. Co-enquiry with children, towards pre-determined ‘truths’ is prevalent as a form of teacher learning.
* *Teacher transformation*, here trainee teachers are active enquirers engaging in meaningful learning that is not bounded by practice or policy, professional mentors or academics, or themselves as they are active ‘makers of meaning’. Their enquiry in practice leads them to question and reason about their teaching, enabling personal transformation that is afforded by both professional mentor and academic tutor as part of the learning conversation.

Each of these pedagogies highlights the interaction between agent and the environment that is pivotal to the quality of teacher learning outcomes, and demonstrates the potential variation in meaningful learning that may take place in classrooms, university seminars and other settings within the partnership. The shift in thinking about partnership and teacher learner mirrors the re-positioning of the learner in relation to the world that transforms a view of pedagogy and teacher learning from replication, through formation to transformation. This re-positioning of the learner in relation to the classroom, demonstrates a progression ‘from relative dependency and limited ways of thinking in practice, as in the novice situation, to one of greater autonomy and the ability to think more effectively in practice, [that] is nurtured through the structures and transformative learning opportunities’ (Totterdell, Hathaway and la Velle, in press 2011). This paper explores the *pedagogy of partnership* by presenting a conceptual framework for such a partnership and learning design that affords these transformative opportunities.

**Conceptual Framework**

Expanding the capacity to learn: a *signature pedagogy* of Partnership Learning *to Learn*

Crick (2007) discusses the concept of LHTL or expanding one’s capacity to learn and the related concept of ‘Learning Power’ (i.e. particular dispositions, values and attitudes, with a lateral and temporal connectivity) in terms of a:

paradigm shift () towards a relational and transformative model of learning, in which the creation of interdependent communities of intentional learners provides a basis for the integration of ‘traditional academic’ skills and outcomes with the learning dispositions, values and attitudes necessary to meet the demands of the emerging ‘networked society’. (p. 137)

In terms of the type of Partnership *Learning* being aspired to at Hope such a paradigm shift will involve professionals (including novice i.e. student) across boundaries, turning to face one another as learners with a sense of agency and choice. Here, intentional learning goes beyond simply the promotion and acquisition of study skills and strategies and requires practices which invoke the need for the learner to take responsibility for their own learning, and to do this in a way that involves others. In focusing on expanding one’s capacity to learn core dimensions of learning or key learning capacities are promoted to do with: ‘critical curiosity’; ‘meaning making’; ‘resilience’; ‘creativity’; ‘reciprocity’; and ‘strategic awareness’. The notion of temporal connectivity and lateral connectivity, as discussed by Crick (2007), are of particular interest in terms of the promotion of PartnershipLearning *to Learn*:

temporal connectivity refers to a ‘way of being’ in the world that orientates a person towards changing and learning over time and in different contexts, and lateral connectivity refers to the ideas embedded in a sociocultural view of learning in which the learner is a ‘person in relation’ to other people and to cultural tools and artefacts in which learning is frequently mediated through the interactions of learning relationships… (p. 137)

**Pedagogic implications**

In promoting such a distinct pedagogy two related areas concerning one’s epistemological beliefs are brought into sharp relief, namely: understanding ‘learning’ and becoming an independent learner; and understanding ‘knowledge’ and becoming competent in constructing knowledge within a discipline. Ursula Wingate (2007) in her article *A Framework for Transition: Supporting ‘Learning to Learn’ in Higher Education* unpacks both in the following way (see Table 1):

**Table 1**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Components of Learning to Learn | |
| I. Understanding ‘learning’ and becoming an independent learner | II. Understanding ‘knowledge’ and becoming competent in constructing knowledge |
| 1. Gaining awareness of conceptions of learning and knowledge in discipline  2. Assessing one’s present abilities as learner  3. Setting short-term and long-term goals and targets  4. Planning action for reaching targets  5. Monitoring progress in reaching targets  6. Evaluating progress/achievements | 1. Gaining awareness of conceptions of learning and knowledge in discipline  2. Approaching information (lectures, texts) in a focused and critical manner  3. Evaluating existing knowledge  4. Synthesising different sources  into a coherent argument  5. Expressing own voice |

Wingate’s unpacking of L2L highlights the role of the university in creating critical thinking persons and is supportive of others (Brownlee, 2004; Hammer and Elby, 2002; Hofer, 2001) who also argue that an understanding of students’ ideas and behaviour, and their beliefs about the nature of knowledge, are critical components of successful teaching. This paper argues that such thinking should be extended to include all those persons involved in ITE and associated partnership practices (e.g. academic, teacher or other professional). Indeed, as part of the New Professionalism research project one’s beliefs about knowledge and knowing and the relationships that exist between each of the stakeholders in the ITE partnership are proving to be crucial in affording or constraining the quality of teacher learning at Liverpool Hope. In questioning academics, mentors, professionals and experts, and students about their role in promoting subject knowledge, different categories of description and associated affordances and constraints in respect of one’s epistemological beliefs have emerged. These are set out in Table 2 below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 2: Affordance and Constraints of Partnership Learning *to Learn*** | | |
| Categories of description of the promotion of subject knowledge | Epistemology | Affordance and Constraints |
| Category A: Subject knowledge gained prior to teacher ***replication*** in practice | **Dualist**  Professional knowledge is gained through observing experts (mentors)  Subject knowledge is given by authority (university & mentors), stable and unchanging  Academic knowledge is transcendental, cannot be applied to the classroom | High academic achievement is not a pre-requisite to becoming a good teacher  Personal experience of school informs teaching  Innate teacher ability is a precursor to success e.g. as having parents who were teachers, a range of non-intellective qualities  Demonstration/observation of mentor – lack of variation  Academic knowledge not timely or immediately applied |
| Category B: Subject knowledge acquired during teacher ***formation***, bounded by curriculum and policy | **Multiplicity**  Professional knowledge is gained through length of experience and persistence, regulated by experts  Subject knowledge are the basics, greater understanding is acquired during teaching or co-investigation with children  Academic knowledge - instructive, formal source of ideas about teaching | Bounded by policy and established practice  Mentor is seen as regulator – persistently checking lesson plans, observation feedback   Mentor act as guides to policy   Technology based access to knowledge   Observation of practice by experts, performance validation  Favours hard work and persistence |
| Category C: Subject knowledge embodied in teacher practice, created through teacher ***transformation*** | **Relational**  Subject knowledge is dynamic, temporal and emergent in the classroom or other contexts  Academic knowledge informs reasoning during professional dialogue and ways of seeing the classroom | Student disposition, self-determining and self-regulated learning  Variation in experience – observation and practice  Deep subject knowledge  Valuing students questions and contribution |

**The role of ITE in expanding our capacity to learn as intra-professional learners**

Poerksen in his paper: *Learning how to learn*, (2005, p. 471) suggests that a key problem of degree courses is knowing how to begin teaching students “already moulded into shape by parents, schools and the peculiarities of their cultural environments”. In terms of intra-professional learning the same argument applies but will be more challenging because individuals’ ways of being, seeing and doing are likely to be even more ingrained. Poerksen suggests that the first step in order to avoid the ‘hidden’ perception that learners (who are ignorant) need to be instilled with knowledge is to replace the teaching paradigm with the learning paradigm. To achieve a paradigm shift, Poerksen proposes a radical constructivist model of education, learning and teaching in which: (1) learners are viewed as active autonomous makers of knowledge, (2) knowledge is not simply transferred, (3) tutors are not seen as the guardians of truth and certainty, and (4) emphasis is placed on the role of dialogue. Four key role models: socratic teaching; moderator; cooperative researcher; and perturbance agent are discussed in respect of a radical constructivist curriculum.

Within a radical constructivist model of Teacher Education, Socratically inspired teaching searches out the questions most suitable to agitate their learning partner’s minds, to disturb, upset, and astonish them. The ‘tutor’ does not set out to solve problems, but to generate them, assuming the role of problem designer. In adopting the role of moderator they attend to the contours of the dialogues and insist on definitions and terminological precision whenever necessary. They will prevent dialogues from drifting off into marginal areas that seem unpromising. They will point out existing knowledge canons of excellence but avoid presenting them as collections of ultimate truths whose validity is context-independent. The constructivist model of learning creates environments in which learning takes place because the partners – the students, academics, teachers or experts – recognise and experience it to be necessary.

As part of the New Professionalism research project the more discerning conceptions of one’s role in the promotion of subject knowledge and teacher learning reflects, in part, the radical constructivist model of learning espoused by Poerksen (2005). Here, a relational and multistructural level of learning (Biggs, 1999) is implied in which an appreciation of the significance of the parts in relation to the whole is intimated and connections made. Further implied, is that reflection is planned with a focus involving systematic, research activity with a clear sense of purpose; talk involves sharply focused observation, is informed by data, involves evidencing and justifying one’s ideas and beliefs and making judgements through one’s action. Profound reflection that produces personal meaning is also alluded to (i.e. reflection that generates new ideas, strategies and personal theories; ‘analysing’ talk; ‘evaluative’ talk; ‘creative’ talk related to producing new ideas and solutions).

Formational views of knowledge imply that knowledge of teaching is acquired, bounded by policy and established practices, regulated by ‘experts’. A unistructural level of learning can be associated with this view of knowledge. Here, simple and obvious connections are made, but their significance is not grasped. A multistructural level is also possible.Reflection that modifies or remedies is likely to be experienced/engaged with: ‘pause’ talk, ‘wait’ talk; the talk of modification and re-adjustment – ‘let’s think again’ talk*.* Also likely isreflection on action in which knowledge and understanding is reshaped and reviewed through interpersonal talk (e.g. dialogue, discussion, questions to promote reflection; talk to produce agreed, shared modifications to action on proposed actions).

Less sophisticated conceptions, which, in turn, are likely to lead to impoverished practice reflect a pre-structural level of learning (Biggs, 1999). Here, unconnected information, which has no organisation and makes no real sense, is simply acquired. Reflection at this level of learning tends towards dealing with action and, as such, is instructive, involving reactive talk and talk that deals with the immediate.

**Establishing an enabling L2L environment in ITE partnerships**

In one of the most authoritative accounts of learning and its application to education, cognitive scientists Bransford, Brown and Cocking (2000, pp 12 - 14), discuss the way in which learning theory, including that associated with expanding one’s capacity to learn (Rawson, 2000; Moon, 2006; Poerksen, 2005) can be aligned with the design of effective learning environments. These environments, conceptualized within an enabling framework, are described as: learner centred; knowledge centred; assessment centred; and community centred:

* *Learner-centred* environments pay careful attention to the knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs that learners bring to the educational setting. This relates to diagnostic teaching, which starts from the structure of the learner’s knowledge; if the teacher’s starting point is very different, then teacher and learner swiftly part company.
* *Knowledge-centred* environments provide for learners’ understanding rather than mere performance. Learners come to understand how a subject works, and what its big ideas are. This involves approaches to teaching that help learners learn the ‘landscape’ of the disciplines in the curriculum.
* *Assessment-centred* environments are strong in formative feedback to learners and encourage more active learner involvement in the assessment process. More collaborative forms of assessment are aligned with similar movements in the areas of Learning Outcomes and the curriculum emerges from a dialogue between the learner and educator. Building upon this, assessing how a person learns and providing evidence on this becomes as important, or more important than assessing what has been learned. As such, the learning process is seen as more fundamental than the results produced.
* *Community-centred* environments recognise that classrooms are embedded in a larger community. The central idea that people will learn from one another, and will try to improve their learning, is fostered by establishing explicit connections between learning experiences.

Achieving such an enabling culture and requisite epistemological redefinition within partnership practice in ITT is not easy since this runs counter to that which is popular. Focusing on those dispositions, beliefs and values associated with L2L, Claxton (2006, p. 9) argues that such an epistemic culture will need to attend to the following areas of its operation, as indicated in Table 3 below. The *language* employed will need to change. *Activities* will need to be selected, designed and framed so that they deliberately focus on stretching particular dispositions, values and attitudes; Claxton deems this ‘split-screen’ teaching, with a screen for content and a screen for learning practices. *Wild topics* or themes will be required that give students freedom to develop their emerging capacity for learning to learn. *Transparency* will be required as to the role of the learner, and their involvement in the process of expanding their learning to learn capacities. Students will need to be encouraged to look for *out-of-‘classroom’ applications* and modifications of the learning dispositions, so that a continual transfer of thinking occurs. There will need to be a sense of *progression*, so the dispositions continue to get stronger, broader and richer. Finally, *modelling* of the learning dispositions will be required on the part of all involved in the partnership. Whilst Claxton’s discussion is focused on school culture, the points made are worthy of consideration in other educational contexts such as partnership practice(s) in ITT.

**Table 3**

**Aspects of an epistemic culture**

Language – we all speak ‘learnish’

Activities – a potentiating milieu

Split-screen thinking – the warp and weft

Wild topics – rich, real, responsible

Transparency and involvement – students as epistemic co-workers

Application – to other contexts

Progression – stronger, broader, deeper . . .

Modelling – walking the learning talk

**The Pedagogic Design Features of the *signature pedagogy* Partnership Learning *to Learn***

*The learners*

Being a learner in the context of Partnership Learning *to Learn* at Liverpool Hope University is not confined to the role of trainee teacher. Learning is a process experienced by all in the partnership, as transformational learning leading to an altering of one’s way of knowing the ‘classroom’. Each learner is a self-determining agent; through an interactionist perspective we recognise that learning is vital, self-motivated, dynamic and relational (Greeno, 1994; Ryan and Deci, 2000), requiring the capability to adapt to change presupposed by dispositions towards research and enquiry in practice (Tishman and Andrade, 1999). In Perkins, Jay and Tishmans’ (1993) triadic conception of dispositions, three psychological components must be present to presuppose a thinking disposition; *sensitivity* - the perception of the appropriateness of a particular behaviour; *inclination* - the felt impetus toward a behaviour; and *ability* - the basic capacity to follow through with the behaviour. With this in mind, a particular ‘atmosphere’ is encouraged which will promote and afford the development of the key learning and thinking dispositions of reflection, resilience, resourcefulness and reciprocity (Claxton, 2002; Greeno, 1994).

Sensitivity reflects a move towards teaching expertise, enhanced through variation in experience enabling learners to discern the ‘classroom’ more clearly and adapt their practice to the situation. This combined with inclination helps advance professional judgement and awareness to recognise the correct ‘pattern’ in response to the classroom and commit to action with resilience and resourcefulness. Self-determination and self-motivation are thus intrinsic to inclination and an impetus and willingness to engage in, persist with and comprehend challenging tasks and concepts in the classroom during an ‘uncomfortable time of uncertainty’ (Fisher and Rush, 2008) when the social-contextual conditions afford an optimal learning climate (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Greeno, 1994). Ability is meshed with sensitivity and inclination, reflected in the confidence and capacity to act, the partnership supporting the transformation of sophisticated understandings of practice and intentions into a particular pedagogic strategy (Shulman and Shulman, 2004).

In context of the afforded view of learning adopted here, Tishman and Andrade (1999) discuss whether dispositions can be taught, or as they say ‘for people to learn to reason better, to be more open minded, to be more reflective, to be more strategic, and so forth’. Mindful of this, the architectural design of the partnership engenders an ‘atmosphere’ afforded to develop these key dispositions through productive co-enquiry and critical learning conversations between all agents, promoting a learning to learn philosophy (Claxton, 2002; Perkins, 1995). This ‘atmosphere’ and learning space promote enculturation where key dispositions emerge in response to immersion in a particular cultural milieu, one that promotes thinking (Perkins, Jay & Tishman, 1993). The professional culture demonstrated here aspires to a critical dialogue as portrayed by on-going learning conversations and productive co-enquiry and research in practice.

*The ‘atmosphere’ of the learning space*

The ‘learners’ described above form an essential enabling element of the agent-environment social-contextual system that forms the partnership (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The ‘atmosphere’ is a set of conditions that when in alignment with the learners provides the optimal learning space to promote teacher transformation. Such an ‘atmosphere’ is fundamental to the learning community that strives to achieve the collective goal of the partnership to support excellence in teaching that leads to successful learning outcomes for all children. This collective and shared goal is powerful and explicit, underpinning the professional culture and relationships that exist.

The power of the ‘atmosphere’ highlights that the key learning and thinking dispositions are by themselves insufficient to afford transformational learning. A specific culture and new ways of working would need to be established within the professional relationships that are built in the partnership, in order to support complex forms of engagement and types of knowledge emergent (Edwards, 2005). This culture would then counteract the inhibiting temporality of learning experiences that can sometimes exist at school, consequently making school-based learning both consistent and gradational for students. In this ‘atmosphere’ learners are not part of a ‘one-size-fits-all’ process, instead attention is paid to their particular individual learning needs and challenges that focus on revealing their epistemological beliefs (Kegan, 2009). The ‘atmosphere’ of the learning space, as represented by the partnership, is not bounded by practice or policy, or its learners enabling expansive learning as described by Engeström (2008), with the individual agents re-positioning themselves in relation to the ‘classroom’ as a result of seeing more in it (Edwards, 2005). A critical epistemological stance is central to this re-positioning, a change in the individuals relationship with the world where ways of thinking about education and the ‘classroom’, and learning are transformed, through the reframing of meaning perspectives (Achinstein and Barret, 2004).

*The ‘architecture’ of the partnership*

Central to the collaborative model of partnership and signature pedagogy is its architectural design and construction (Shulman, 2005). The model hinges around the key pedagogical design features as set out in this paper. The construction of the model of partnership focuses on the collaboration between all the constituent stakeholders in a participatory approach to development (see Appendix 1). This is a central premise that reflects the key ideological perspectives we hold about collaboration, and the relationships between partners is central to this process.

Within the geographical limits of the partnership is the University and a network of high performing ‘Professional Learning Schools’ identified by Ofsted as ‘*good with outstanding feature*s’. These schools assume a strategic role in the promotion of teacher learning and professional development (initial, early and continuous). Other schools with recognized expertise and/or unique characteristics also assume a strategic role within the network. Integral to the pedagogic design within the network, are key constituents and representatives these include:

* A ‘Professional Learning Coordinator’ - situated in all schools with responsibility for trainee teachers in school in relation to management and administration, pedagogical matters, pastoral care, and monitoring and assessment;
* A number of ‘Senior Professional Learning Coordinators’ – offering strategic leadership across the network, including, but not limited to, a programme of professional learning, assessing and working towards the dissemination of expertise across the network, brokering professional learning opportunities for all constituents;
* University-based Academics assigned to the network – assuming strategic responsibility during first week(s) of any placement when focused observations and enquiry will take place, pivotal in establishing and helping to oversee the programme of professional learning;
* The Trainee Teachers *–* trainees are a professional asset, self-determining learners contributing to the school as an educative community.

*Methodologies and activities*

The architecture, its network, key constituents and representatives, enables a set of teaching and learning methodologies and activities that exist to dissolve the boundaries between the world of the trainee teachers, academics and professionals. In doing so an epistemic culture is promoted where assumptions about knowledge and the ‘known’ are challenged to reveal a new epistemology where neither knowledge gained through academic nor experiential experience are privileged, instead both are used and traded amongst the participants, and created in contextualised professional settings across the partnership. Knowing the ‘classroom’ in the partnership combines both academic and practical dimensions as a way of understanding a situation (Totterdell, Hathaway & la Velle, in press 2011). The two dimensions are synthesised through practitioner co-enquiry and research that explores the epistemological dimensions of teacher knowledge, its justification, sources, certainty and simplicity (Hofer & Pintrich, 1987). The outcomes of such productive enquiry are focused at improvement at an individual, classroom and school level, through the identification of practice that is not about ‘doing things better, but doing better things’ and identifying ‘best practice’ (Bennis & Biederman, 1997). Fundamental to ‘doing better things’ is the identification of critical features of the phenomena being experienced in the classroom, a powerful form of meta-perception that stems from ‘critical noticing’ and is linked to reflection. Focussed observation and co-enquiry in practice are linked to specific elements of the programme of professional learning e.g. Assessment for Learning. Indeed, observation is augmented by a shared repertoire within pre- and post-observation talk between the trainee teacher-professional-academic, either face to face or via virtual discussion as part of an ongoing learning conversation.

*Underpinning beliefs and values of all agents*

The shared beliefs and values of all agents underpin the joint enterprise of the partnership community with the explicit collective goal to support excellence in teaching that leads to successful learning outcomes for all children (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Mutual engagement within the partnership exists to support the achievement of this goal, though creating social-contextual conditions where knowledge generation takes the form of more powerful ways of knowing by way of learning to ‘see’ more of the classroom representing a transformed view of the world. A partnership that aspires to individual learner transformation, is characterised by relativist and contextual beliefs about the nature of knowledge and knowing, recognising learners as active makers of meaning that embrace strong commitments to the how the educative world can be (Perry, 1970; Baxter Magolda, 1999). These commitments encompass the values and beliefs of educators that underpin the professional learning designs for productive enquiry, informing the consequent professional judgement and reasoning emergent with these activities.

**Leading and Managing collaboration through Partnership Learning *to Learn* at Liverpool Hope University**

In leading on the stabalising and development of new partnership practices it has been important to posit any developments as a moment of opportunity, in the belief that: (1) the existing model of partnership was not harnessing, sufficiently, the potential of collaboration or ‘collaborative advantage’; (2) that practice had become institutionalised in an unquestioning way; and, (3) that those collaborating were doing so because they have always done so and would just carry on collaborating in what Mary Douglas describes in a ‘fatalistic’ way (Walsh and Kahn, 2010). A challenge has been to ascertain at which point in time or place, or which aspect to start the reconceptualisation.

From the outset I have been conscious that all partnerships or collaborations are dynamic, ever changing and multi-faceted involving, some times, many people with differing needs and multiple settings. If not managed effectively any one of these issues can prevent the partnership from achieving its aims (Vangen and Huxham, 2003). Even though the partnership is well established, with many good relationships and, in many instances, a good level of trust, changes in key representatives have necessitated long over-due changes in roles, remits and responsibilities. Such changes in processes and systems have needed to be embedded in the mindsets of all those involved in the partnership via intensive face-to-face professional development ‘Partnership Learning’ events and bespoke, close-up briefing meetings. Such events have been phased in alongside more traditional training activities aimed at professionals working in schools and academics working in the University. Documentation (both hard copy and virtual) has required updating and informal communications via email and phone have been encouraged. Such activity has been pivotal towards promoting a mutually agreed understanding of the purpose and form of collaboration. Throughout, every effort is being made to promote a trusting and respectful relationship – all of which will takes time. Walsh and Kahn (2010, pp. 193-194) argue that: “The question of time, time horizon, is another interesting issue…different time frames will foster different forms of collaboration”.

Walsh and Kahn (2010) further explain that in promoting collaboration, careful attention needs to be paid to considering what engages someone’s energy and investment, their agency in making the whole thing work. In leading on changes to partnership, considerable time has been invested in exploring the benefits of the developed model of partnership for ALL. Crucial, here, has been the role of theory and research. In striving towards a ‘community of practitioners’ in which different persons as carriers of knowledge face one another as learning partners has required careful consideration being given to the concept of learning partner and our modeling of this in all our communications about the proposed developments. Furthermore, a holistic approach to collaboration (Whitchurch, 2008) has been taken, which might include: team working; project orientation; networking; accommodation to uncertainty/complexity; political astuteness; adaptavieness.

Whilst acknowledging the argument towards ‘collaborative advantage’ (Huxham and Vangen, 2005) a desire to collaborate and to promote alternative practices to collaboration has the potential to be disruptive of existing structures and practice. It will challenge organizational structures and the ways in which individuals construct their sense of who they are. This has certainly been the experience at Liverpool Hope. In leading on the proposed changes to partnership I have had to recognize that for those who wish to protect the status quo of their agency or organization these challenges are not minor. I have also had to reflect on the argument being pushed by those feeling vulnerable that in times of resource constraint organisations need stability and security of purpose and structure in order to function effectively. However, drawing of previous research into collaboration (Diamond and Rush, 2009) I am confident that the demands of contemporary public policy choices and pressures rule out such an approach. The pressures on organisations (including universities) imply that co-operation or collaboration are the ‘smart’ routes to adopt.

**Visioning the way forward**

As I present this paper, the reconceptualised model of partnership explored here is going through the process of implementation at Liverpool Hope University as a collaborative construct led by the Faculty of Education and a network of schools. Through this participatory approach, strong relationships are building between all the stakeholders, spanning the academic-professional divide. The curriculum is under going review in order to re-distribute as well as re-define the focus and nature of learning activities across the available teaching and learning contexts within the partnership. During this process, the epistemological beliefs of those involved are coming to the fore as key questions emerge regarding the epistemic nature of teacher learning and knowledge. The orchestration and full articulation of this pedagogy presents both operational and conceptual challenges. This ‘uncomfortable time of uncertainty’ indicates a prelude to teacher transformation and a shift by many in their understanding of the ways teachers learn and is concurrent with the emergence of new ways of working. Consequently, the author alongside key representatives of the Liverpool Hope Univesity’s partneship plan to conduct a research project evaluating the implementation and impact of the model and pedagogy of partnership. If successful, this novel pedagogy has the potential to enhance the culture of professional learning in higher education and schools in the UK. Furthermore, at a classroom level, it could contribute to the development of pedagogic expertise linked to achieving the desired goal of the successful learning outcomes of children.

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