

Trying to Make a Difference:
Re-thinking the Practicum

Glenda Campbell-Evans and Carmel Maloney

Faculty of Education
Edith Cowan University
Perth, Western Australia

Paper presented at the 1995 annual meeting of the Australian
Association for Research in Education, Hobart, Tasmania.

Trying to Make a Difference: Re-thinking the Practicum

Glenda Campbell-Evans and Carmel Maloney
Faculty of Education
Edith Cowan University

Traditionally Edith Cowan University (ECU) has operated on a "technical rational" model of teacher education, as outlined in the literature by Zeichner (1992), Russell and Munby (1992) and Schon (1983). The teacher education program presented at ECU draws on the effective teaching research literature and can best be described as competency based. The program equates the acquisition of specific skills of teaching with successful student learning. A knowledge base of teaching is determined by sets of competencies that are put into practice by student teachers during specified practicum sessions in schools (Campbell-Evans and Maloney, 1994). In this way the model assumes that those who know (university teachers) transmit knowledge to those who do (university students) (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995).

At ECU a significant proportion of the teacher training course is conducted at university, with substantial periods of field experience. Student-teachers are expected to apply specified skills, demonstrate competencies, and make connections between theory and practice. Guidelines are prepared to identify essential expectations of

student-teachers and to outline a hierarchy of teaching competencies for each field experience placement. The skill components of teaching are carefully graded and sequenced and delivered through on-campus university units. Student-teachers are assessed on their mastery of these skills during field experience sessions.

It is not surprising that student teachers report they learn most about teaching during their field experiences and rate these as the most valuable components of the course. In the eyes of the students the university coursework provides the theory but the real work of learning to teach happens in the school. At ECU, student teachers especially regard the final professional practice of ten weeks, known as the Assistant Teacher Program (ATP) as a critical component of their

course. The degree of success in ATP impacts significantly on students' prospects of gaining employment. Consequently, it was this placement which was examined by a team of university teachers and for which an alternative program was developed. The initiative was intended to transform the practicum experience and to link teacher education more closely to schools, thus altering the responsibilities and commitment to the preparation of future teachers.

The team of university teachers wanted to be in a better position to prepare students for the task of teaching. They believed that if the practicum was to be more than an apprenticeship, that is, learning a series of technical skills in a "hit and run" fashion, then as much as possible needed to be gained from the school based experience. In particular, the university team was concerned with the students' lack of ability to ask and to answer the "why" questions about practice, theory and curriculum. The team was keen for students to develop an understanding of the relationship of theory and practice - that theory is embedded in practice. They wanted students to be more responsible for their own inquiry into their teaching, thus focusing on the students' ability to be reflective about their practice. The university team was also committed to fostering a particular kind of 'quality reflection' among themselves, the co-operating teachers and the student-teachers as described by Zeichner (1993). Encouraging skills of focusing on personal practice with reference to the context in which the practice was situated, and providing students with explicit strategies for monitoring, analysing and improving their teaching were goals set by the team. These, together with the desire to promote reflection as a collective activity involving all stakeholders, became a high priority for the university teachers.

In 1994, four members of the Faculty of Education introduced the alternative practicum model at Edith Cowan University. The program, named the School Based Semester (SBS), provided an opportunity for a cohort of students, faculty and teachers to work together over a full semester in an integrated, extended practice model. The program

continued in 1995 with the participation of fifteen third year students, fifteen classroom teachers in seven schools, and four members of the University staff.

THE NATURE OF SBS

The SBS undertaking was a collaborative attempt to provide a context for theoretical learning and to acknowledge the significance of implicit knowledge. It was concerned with the improvement of the teaching and learning of three major stakeholder groups; the third year students, the school-based staff and the university faculty. Based in current thinking about teaching and learning to teach, (Britzman, 1991; Bullough, 1989) SBS sought to help students learn to 'think like a teacher'. Specifically, the program aimed to:

- more closely integrate the knowing and doing of trainee teachers
- explore students' knowing and doing
- explore the process of making implicit knowledge, explicit
- foster collaborative practice

The traditional ATP semester operates in two phases. Phase one is a compacted semester where students complete the work of a full fifteen week semester in eight weeks. Lecture and tutorial times are increased accordingly and students complete assignment and examination requirements for three units. This phase corresponds with term one of the Western Australian school year. During phase two of the semester,

students were in their school placement five days a week for the extended practice component of their program. Weekly teaching time gradually increases until students are teaching full time. The traditional program presents theoretical content to students before they embark on their long term practice.

SBS students began their practice on the first day of term one and in most cases also attended staff planning and professional development days held prior to school opening. Students were in schools three days per week for twelve weeks. They engaged in library and group seminar work on the remaining two days. In the group seminars, students worked with university teacher/s to explore a number of integrated topics planned to extend their classroom experience. For the last eight weeks of semester, the school-time allocation increased to five days per week. Students were involved with issues related to theory and practice each week of the term in the integrated model.

The major differences between SBS and the traditional ATP semester were threefold; in SBS, students were in schools over a longer period of time, the student-university teacher relationship was well developed with increased opportunities for analysis, discussion and reflection upon the teaching experience, and the link between theory and practice was made more explicit.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, formal and informal data were collected from three stakeholder groups involved in the SBS program. The sample comprised fourteen student teachers and fourteen co-operating teachers (classroom teachers) who volunteered to be part of the alternative program. Four university teachers completed the sample. Informal data were drawn from group tutorial meetings held weekly either at the school site or on the university campus; informal meetings and discussions with student teachers, co-operating teachers, and university teachers; and interactive journals which students maintained for the duration of the practicum. Formal data were gathered from end-of-program focus meetings with each stakeholder group, and from an 'end of SBS' survey distributed to the students.

An analysis of data highlighted issues, ideas, and patterns of experiences underlying the SBS program. Data are presented for each of the stakeholder groups. Significant themes are identified and presented as a way of representing the lived experience of each group. The data provided an insight into the complex realities of field experience, a better understanding of the alternative practicum model, and new ways of viewing and talking about the practicum component of teacher education.

THE STUDENTS

During the student focus meeting and in the individual survey, students responded openly about the strengths and weakness of the program. While making suggestions for improvement, the group unanimously confirmed that given the choice again, they would choose SBS over the mainstream program. While most believed that SBS was harder than the normal third year offering, all but one felt that the extra effort was worth it. All students believed that they learned more than they would have if they had not participated in SBS. The power of the program, for the students, was related to support, experience, image, and relationships. These four important themes emerged from the data and are discussed in turn.

Support

For the students, the amount and quality of the support they received from significant others connected to the program contributed to their experience and appraisal of SBS. As a group, the students believed that they had more support than would be the case in the ATP program. This support came from peers, school personnel, and university teachers. In addition, the students valued the tutorial group sessions

as an important context for support. The students declared that these meetings provided a non-threatening environment in which to think and talk about their practice. The group took responsibility for suggesting strategies and options to deal with difficult situations and offered congratulations for successes. The students indicated that they felt there was always someone to talk to." They also felt supported by their schools in that they were made to feel part of the staff, rather than visitors to the school. As 'insiders', students benefited from teachers' willingness to share resources, planning and expertise.

Given the structure of the program, students knew the university team in multiple ways. University teachers conducted the workshop sessions, worked with students in tutorial sessions and visited them in their schools. The students reported that knowing their university teachers in these multiple roles and over the extended time resulted in an integrated practice experience which provided a level of support not possible in the traditional program. The student teachers also reported a notable change in the role of university teacher from 'supervisor to supporter'. They attributed this to the length of the program and the close association they had with one university teacher.

Relationships

The SBS program was characterised by strong relationships. Student teachers developed positive relationships with program participants, and also with the children and their parents. Many students valued the twenty week duration of SBS as it allowed them to gain confidence in a setting where they had stability and a degree of permanence. They believed that they had time to build better relationships with the class, with the co-operating teacher, and with the university teacher.

The quality of the relationships strengthened the practice experience in a number of ways. As a result of knowing the pupils and the class teacher, student teachers felt that they were operating from a familiar, supportive base. This boosted their confidence and provided the student teachers with a safe environment in which to explore and experiment with teaching approaches, techniques and priorities. Operating in a small group of fifteen facilitated discussion and interaction on a more personal basis than would otherwise occur. One suggested that, "supervisors know you better in SBS. It's not three visits and here's your ATP mark."

Experience

The development of relationships is related in part, to the time 'on site'. SBS allowed students, especially those of a reserved or cautious nature, more time to settle into their placement, to feel comfortable and to build confidence in their own teaching ability. The

students spoke about the advantages of having more experience - a longer time to get to know the children and to test and try a range of teaching strategies. They were in classrooms long enough to develop positive relationships with the children, the teacher and the

supervisor; stresses of the 'unknown' were reduced.

The students judged 'more as better' in terms of their twenty week experience vis a vis the ten week ATP. They referred to the "extra ten weeks of experience", the benefits of "more in-school experience" and planning "long range learning experiences of twenty weeks rather than six or seven weeks" as advantages of SBS. For some, the extended practice allowed them to confirm that "teaching is for me", or it provided a "realistic feel of teaching as a career". They also indicated that they believed they experienced a greater variety of activities and responsibilities given their extended time in schools and this related particularly to special term events such as camps, parent nights, report writing, parent interviews and professional development opportunities.

A significant contribution to their experience was the opportunity to witness and participate in the work of setting up a classroom and preparing for the first day of school. This was a strong motive for some students and influenced their decision to participate in SBS. When asked to think back over the reasons they choose the program, at least half of the students reported that the opportunity "to see how things are set up from day one" and "to see everything right from the start" and to gain "week one experience" was instrumental. For one student, the early placement in school meant that she "learned what school was in real-life and that on day one, I had to set limits." Students reported that as a result of SBS, they felt better prepared to teach their own class upon graduation.

Image as Teacher

When introducing the SBS option to prospective students, the university teachers emphasised that in their view, students who choose SBS would "live the life of a teacher not a university student". They indicated that they believed this was a significant strength of the program. During the focus group meeting, students made numerous remarks that indicated they had indeed 'felt like teachers' during SBS. To illustrate; "I was placed in a realistic position and made to feel like a real teacher and a normal ATP would not have been able to provide this situation," and "I learned so much and gained a real insight into the realistic life of a teacher and really found out a lot about myself and my own capabilities." The students spoke about the advantages of being "seen as a teacher - seen by the school, the parents and the children." They believed that it eased the building of relationships with pupils and that it afforded them the opportunity to participate

more fully in the life of the school.

A number of students attributed the relationships which developed over the period of the practice to their opportunity to be with the pupils from the first day of school. The student teachers believed this contributed to pupils' viewing and responding to them as a classroom teacher. ATP students enter classrooms for the second school term. Pupils generally know that the student is not their 'real teacher' and will only visit the classroom for ten weeks of the entire school year. SBS students, on the other hand, were in their classrooms for half the school year and met the pupils at the same time as the substantive teacher. Pupils responded to both adults as teacher. SBS students saw this as a distinct advantage of their experience. They felt "accepted as a real teacher for twenty weeks in a realistic situation".

The experience of ATP students is often very classroom based, that is, they focus on classroom issues and have little real involvement in school related matters. The SBS students reported involvement in a

number of school based activities, initiatives which contributed to their transition from student to teacher and to the image they held of themselves as teacher. They reported a feeling of acceptance, of belonging to the school and to the staff, "I was also a member of staff, not just a student."

THE CO-OPERATING TEACHERS

The co-operating teacher feedback session was held at the conclusion of the SBS program for 1995. Co-operating teachers were invited to attend a focus group meeting at the university, to review and reflect on the practicum model and to generate ideas for future improvement in the innovation. This session was also attended by three school principals and it was intended that discussion would lead to greater input from school personnel in relation to the planning and further development of the program. Several key issues emerged and were discussed which directly impacted on the schools' participation in the program and on their role with the students and with the university. Issues included: understanding the university requirements; degree to which the co-operating teachers' role is one of support and guidance; maintaining contact with pupils; links between the schools and university; final selection of students for the program; and the value of journal writing.

University Requirements

The university team was conscious of the need to be flexible in its requirements for the program yet at the same time to provide a structure for those involved. To this end, the team set broad working

guidelines or parameters for the SBS program within which the three stakeholder groups were to work. In some cases the broad parameters proved difficult for co-operating teachers as they sought more specific details of what the university deemed 'right or wrong'. Several teachers did not have the confidence nor the understanding of the degree of flexibility they had in making school based decisions and consequently struggled to find specific answers to questions about workload and planning format, for example. In their eyes they were 'protecting' the student and to a certain degree protecting themselves, by insisting on specific details about meeting university requirements.

Those teachers (four) involved for a second year in the program were less constrained by the guidelines and felt confident and sufficiently familiar with the parameters that they worked within and around, to meet the needs of the situation. For example, the question of 'how much, how soon' was handled differently by various teachers. Those teachers new to the program interpreted the guidelines verbatim, whilst teachers familiar with the program were able to negotiate the workload in a manner that suited both the school's needs and the student-teacher's stage of development.

Support and Guidance

The degree to which the co-operating teachers became involved in the student-teachers' process of learning to teach varied significantly. One teacher felt it was her role and responsibility to judge the level of development of the individual student-teacher, to provide the opportunity for her to take the reins and to subsequently act as a 'safety net' if necessary. She explained, "It depends on the level of the student. I let her take the reins and she took off. It's something I didn't have as a student teacher and I think it's important"(CT1)2. For this teacher, allowing the student to take the reins supported the student sufficiently to facilitate a mental shift

from student teacher to a 'real' teacher. One principal commented that, "There are very different behaviours displayed by the student when full time teaching begins. There are strengths not shown before. How can we get the student to feel freer?" (P1). According to this principal, encouraging the student to assume greater responsibility for the class enabled her to develop confidence and demonstrate strengths whilst knowing that the co-operating teacher was readily available to guide and support.

For another teacher, working along side the student in a team situation enabled them to share information, expertise and resources and to make appropriate decisions for pupils. "My student and I worked side by side-I'm the extra pair of hands. We were continually collaborating and discussing" (CT2).

In most cases, the longer period of practice in the schools resulted in

sound partnerships developing, based on support at both the classroom level and the school level. The schools involved were committed to the program and determined to include students as staff members. In only one situation did conflict between teacher and student arise, and this was based on a clash of philosophies and beliefs about best practice. In spite of the differences, the co-operating teacher and school continued to support and provide opportunities for the student to continue his practice.

Contact with Children

One dilemma which was highlighted by several teachers and principals related to the amount of contact time co-operating teachers had with their pupils as the practice progressed. As student-teachers increased their teaching load so co-operating teachers decreased direct contact with their class and handed over responsibilities to students. For some schools this was problematic as they grappled with the issue of accountability to parents. Less time with the children, meant less time teachers had to assess and formulate pupil evaluations and thus reporting to parents was regarded as difficult. In a number of situations however, both the co-operating teacher and the student-teacher were present at parent interviews, and both contributed equally to the discussion on pupil assessment. A positive side of this issue emerged as co-operating teachers found that decreasing their face-to-face contact time with children, enabled them to spend more time with individuals or small groups in intensive instructional sessions.

University and School Links

At the focus group meeting, co-operating teachers articulated a strong desire to become more involved in joint decision making with the university. As confidence with the program developed, teachers wanted greater input into the decisions about the program structure and requirements, and in the setting and assessment of assignment work. At the meeting, the notion of a partnership was discussed. It was suggested that schools might take some of the responsibility for content covered in the on-campus course work, especially that content related to planning programs of work. While supportive in principle, the university team was mindful of increasing the workload at the school level. Developing a more collaborative partnership between schools and university, with meetings on campus for discussions and reflection-on-action was strongly advocated particularly from those teachers in their second year of the SBS program. It was evident that teachers were assuming greater ownership of the program, resulting in greater confidence in specifying their needs, and making suggestions

for improvement.

Allocation to Schools

The focus group meeting generated considerable discussion regarding the allocation of students to schools and ultimately to specific classrooms. The major concern related to the matching of co-operating teachers and student-teachers in relation to philosophy, teaching style and approach. Given the length of the program (20 weeks) matching student-teachers to the program, the school, and the teacher, was regarded as critical to the success of the practice and the program. Where there was a clash of philosophies and beliefs about teaching, relationships became strained and student development was limited. The need for careful screening of students entering the program to ensure sound motives and intentions for participation and methods of assigning students to schools, were discussed. It was suggested that students should be initially allocated to a school followed by orientation to the school's policies, ethos, priorities and mode of operation. Teachers could then be given the opportunity to explain their philosophy and classroom approach to facilitate a compatible match. The match had a profound effect on the relationships formed and ultimately on the degree of success of the practice.

Journal Writing

For the duration of the SBS program, student-teachers were required to keep a journal. The journal was intended to be used by student-teachers as a medium for reflecting on successes and failures in teaching and for recording their thoughts and feelings about their teaching experience. Co-operating teachers were encouraged to use the journal to raise questions and to initiate dialogue about teaching. It was intended that the journal become a three way 'written conversation' between student-teacher, co-operating teacher and university teacher about the process of learning to teach. Reactions to the value and effectiveness of the journal were mixed. Expectations for journal writing were clearly set out, however not all students recognised the value of this task. The students, generally had limited experience with journal writing and the associated skills of reflection and inquiry. Some students consequently found the task onerous resulting in entries portraying recounts of daily events with little in-depth analysis or self reflection. Some co-operating teachers had little confidence in journal writing and found it difficult to write about teaching in student's books. Therefore, in some cases the opportunity for a 'conversation' was lost. For one experienced SBS participating teacher however, journal writing was a significant component of her interaction with the student and became a "major form of communication" for the duration of the program.

THE UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

The SBS program was designed and delivered by the university teachers.

This had implications for the ownership, commitment and autonomy of the program. A customised course of study was developed; customised for the university teachers and for the students who chose the option. The program developed from involvement in a special interest group focussed on teachers' knowledge. The discussions led a subset of the group to further explore the concepts within the framework of pre-service teacher education and how that is planned and delivered in the Faculty.

The subset of university teachers began to speculate about how a program would look if it was based on different assumptions, delivered in a different structure, through different processes. This was

'ground up' program development which built commitment to, and ownership of, SBS.

In the course of discussion amongst the university teachers, four issues emerged as central to their experience. Key topics were teamwork, relationships, supervision, and workload.

Teamwork

A reality of SBS for the university teachers was the team aspect of the experience. Fostered by a sense of ownership of the program, they operated as a team with commitment to all the students. They engaged in joint planning, joint decision making and joint rescue. Although each university teacher had primary responsibility for four student teachers, in cases of difficulty and/or success, the event was shared by all.

The planning and decision making was holistic as the team had responsibility for the unit content as well as the supervision of practice. In ECU's standard program, many supervisors have little first hand knowledge of the content of units outside their specialisation. But in SBS, we all know basically what happens in each other's workshops. We certainly know specifically what the assignments are. The people teaching one unit on campus wouldn't necessarily know much about another unit the students are taking. No one could possibly tie up the package in the normal program as we can because first, we share a common point of view and we have knowledge of the content and share the delivery of all three units the students are taking. (UT1)

Staff discussed student progress, school-based issues and program adjustments in a way and with a degree of intensity that would not occur in the traditional program.

There were two crisis points regarding students' continuation in the program. Although each student had one member of the Faculty team as their tutor, in each case, all members of the team became involved in the analysis, debate and discussion of strategy. No one was left to deal with the crisis alone. In reflecting upon one student's struggle with continuing in the program, the group recalled three noonhour

meetings discussing the case. Issues were clarified and suggestions offered to the individual tutor as the consequences for the student and for the program were examined. The tutor speculated that, in ATP if she had wanted to pull out, it would have been something like, 'I respect your attitude and choice. If you want to pull out, pull out' (UT2). In the SBS scenario, however, the team sought to resolve the student's conflict with her school placement. It became important for the team to consider the student, the program and colleagues. "We talked it over. We asked, 'what are we going to do with Fran?' We planned what you could say to her"(UT3). The team member most directly involved admitted that under normal practice circumstances he,

probably would still have let it ride. But after having a discussion (with the team) I felt obliged to be accountable to the group for the fact that they put the effort in to assist. So there was a sense of responsibility for me to do something about it whereas if you don't have the team then there is no need to...I think it is also a sense of obligation to the program to help with the program as well as with the students...its more of a family type of thing, isn't it. (UT2)

Relationships

Relationships were a critical aspect of the SBS experience. The nature of the relationship university teachers had with the students, the

classroom teachers and with the school were different in kind and depth from what would normally occur in the ATP.

Because we do visit the schools more frequently we know the schools. From four visits during ATP, I would get to know something about the school... but because we have ongoing contact in SBS we would actually be able to talk more specifically about the school's way of doing things and the teacher's way of doing things with our students. (UT3)

The university teachers worked more intensely with the students and knew them more intimately than is the case in ATP. The small group tutorials were a feature of the program highly valued by students and university teachers. It was here that students had an opportunity to share their highs and lows and to get support and input from other members of the group. Excellent relationships developed; "we know these students better than we have ever known our ATP students" (UT4). The program was structured to foster collaborative practice. The team worked to recast the 'expert-novice' relationship into one which was more collegial in nature. They asked questions, explored issues, generated solutions with the students rather than for the students. This collaboration shaped the relationship and the style of supervision.

Supervision

In an attempt to encourage quality reflection, the university teachers aimed to move away from the traditional supervisor-student relationship which tends to be characterised by one way feedback and seeks to 'fix' problems, toward a more reciprocal discussion of issues and cases. In tutorial sessions and during feedback on classroom practice, university teachers and student teachers worked together to make explicit the knowledge of teaching within the students' experience. This two-way interaction fostered the expert knowledge students held of their SBS classrooms. The university teachers adopted a supervisory style which sought to move both the students and the team out of the technical domain into a more reflective-professional domain where issues were explored holistically.

I think because of SBS and because of the contact I had with the students, I've become much more analytical about supervising. I am asking students more questions now than I ever did before, rather than telling them...that has come out of the SBS program. (UT3)

Another member of the team also reported changes to her way of providing feedback to students, and a move to a more inclusive style of supervision.

At some point in SBS I became incredibly conscious that I shouldn't just be dishing things out - that I had to try to find ways to make the students come up with answers themselves. So I agree that I too, ask a lot more questions both in the written form and verbally in feedback and I give more general feedback which focuses on issues that are broader than the observed lesson - like evaluation and its relationship to planning, for example. (UT1)

Workload

The workload issues related to SBS are significant. The processes of building quality relationships, demonstrating commitment to a program, reshaping styles of supervision and planning and delivering an integrated program of study are labour intensive and time consuming.

In SBS the four member team reshaped the three prescribed course units into an integrated program which was presented in weekly, four hour workshops. This placed the responsibility for the students' academic program for the semester, with the university team. Normally, this load would be spread across three teams of lecturers. The teaching commitment, therefore were significant. This, together with tutorial sessions, school visits and on-campus availability to students constituted a heavy workload for the university teachers.

As a result of co-operating teachers' more collaborative involvement with the SBS program, university teachers spent more time engaged in

school-level consultation. Team members found themselves more heavily involved in discussion with staff concerning program matters and issues related to student progress. These discussions were important to the improvement of the program, to the maintenance of relationships, and to the development of student teachers. Most of this work occurred outside recognised workload allocations.

There were also positive outcomes of the workload issue as reflected in comments such as,

I think the difference between SBS and ATP for me is that it was a part of my everyday work. It is not 'out there' - an extra task going to see the student three or four times during the ten week period. I think you really do get involved with the students on a personal level as well as a professional level and it becomes an integrated part of your work. (UT4)

In spite of the demands, staff deemed their involvement in SBS to be inspiring and worthwhile. It was professionally stimulating to work with like-minded colleagues in an innovation they believed could make a difference.

CONCLUSION

The SBS program evolved from a strong conviction about ways of developing knowledge about teaching, based on processes of inquiry and reflection. As a result, an alternative model of field experience was designed and implemented at ECU. This model reshaped the traditional content, structure and process of field experience in an attempt to better integrate theory with practice. It was intended that the SBS program would provide ways to unravel and understand the complexities of learning to teach. Students were encouraged to ask questions, to explore issues, and to reflect upon their developing expertise. In rethinking the practicum, the roles of the three stakeholder groups changed considerably.

The student teachers reported that they became "real" teachers as they were absorbed into the life of the school community. They began to feel more like a genuine member of the school staff and less like a guest in a classroom. Feeling like a "real" teacher meant that their role and responsibilities moved beyond the classroom into the wider context of school. The structure of the SBS program provided students with multiple opportunities to engage in all facets of teachers' work. The expanded role helped students come to a deeper understanding of teaching.

The co-operating teachers moved from a role of supervisor to a role of mentor. This shift resulted in teachers finding a balance between providing assessment, offering advice, and challenging thinking. Where

teachers and students held a similar philosophical approach or where

open communication was established, the pairing resulted in a true partnership with joint exploration of teaching and learning. As co-operating teachers grew more confident with the program and began to feel ownership of it, they expressed interest in assuming more responsibility for the decisions related to the structure and content of the program.

SBS also became a medium for the professional development of the university teachers. As a result of involvement in the program, they found they were changing their methods of supervising and of giving feedback to the students. No longer were they primarily concerned with the technical aspects of teaching. The university teachers worked to provide a scaffold for students' learning. In this way, they sought to facilitate collaborative exploration of knowing and doing and to encouraging students to answer the "why" questions through the process of reflection.

The SBS program aimed to provide a field experience which was qualitatively different from the traditional practice. For each of the three stakeholder groups, learning to teach took on new meaning where the responsibility for teacher development became a shared activity. The lived experiences of each group became a context for exploration and change.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Strengthening the partnership between schools and university is a priority for the continued effectiveness of the program. Involving teachers and principals in planning content and structure will ensure that they feel ownership of SBS. This will result in stronger links and better understandings and will alter traditional processes of school-university interaction. It will be important for the university team to create opportunities for collaboration with school based staff and to ensure that the ideas and concern of co-operating teachers are systematically addressed and accommodated in SBS.

Greater attention needs to be given to the processes associated with making knowledge of teaching and learning more explicit. The value of journal writing as a forum for discussion, and an avenue for asking questions needs to be promoted and encouraged. This process would help student teachers, co-operating teachers and university teachers to reflect upon and think about the process of teaching and learning. It is important that participants have an opportunity to refine skills necessary for journal writing. The reluctance to write is often associated with uncertainty about how and/or what to write. Participants need a focus and a purpose together with the necessary

tools to engage in constructive journal conversations with SBS colleagues.

The processes of selection and allocation are issues related to the program. Selection of students, of schools, and of co-operating teachers is crucial to the success of SBS. Given the length and the demands of the program, all participants need to carefully consider their commitment in relation to workload, time and outside responsibilities. The intense nature of the program needs to be carefully examined as participants consider their decision to become involved. Once selected, student teachers are allocated to schools and together with co-operating teachers and university teachers form working triads. The degree to which the match within the triad is compatible, has a significant impact on the success of the program. It is important that issues related to selection and allocation are kept

in the forefront of program development whilst bearing in mind the individuality of all participants.

References

- Britzman, D.P. (1991). *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Bullough, R.V. Jr (1989). *First-year teacher: A case study*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Campbell-Evans, G. and Maloney, C. (1994). *Learning to Teach: A Snapshot of Second Year Education Students*. Paper presented to the annual meeting of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Newcastle, NSW.
- Clandinin, D.J. and Connelly, M. (1995). *Professional Landscapes*. New York: Teacher College Press.
- Russell, T. and Munby, H. (Eds.). (1992). *Teachers and teaching. From classroom to reflection*. New York: The Falmer Press.
- Schon, D. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner*. New York: Basic Books
- Zeichner, K (1992). *Beyond inquiry-oriented teacher education: Rethinking the practicum*. Monograph No. 17.

- 1 One student withdrew from University at the mid point of semester one.
- 2 Transcripts codes: CT refers to co-operating teacher, P to principal, and UT to University teacher.

Trying to Make a Difference: Rethinking the Practicum