

REYO5135

Paper presented at the annual conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education
The University of Western Sydney, Parramatta
27 November-1 December, 2005.
Ruth.Reynolds@newcastle.edu.au

University/School Partnerships: Journeys of Three Academic Partners

Dr Ruth Reynolds
Dr Ann McCormack
Kate Ferguson-Patrick
The University of Newcastle

Abstract

This paper details a study which tracked three academics as they worked as partners to schools undertaking Australian Government Quality Teacher projects with the focus of implementing the NSW Quality Teaching framework through an action research/learning approach. The academic partner, as a mentor, is expected to support a collegial environment where teachers reflect for, on and in action and work and learn with and from each other to explore possible ideas and solutions to issues associated with their teaching practice. However the academic partner often comes into the partnership as a stranger and has to build a professional and individual relationship in a short period of time. The academic partners in this study conducted their own action research study as a means of recording their journeys as mentors, to provide each other with collegial support and to promote the development of their own professional knowledge. They used personal reflection in the form of learning journals, collaboration, discussion and critique as the methodology in their study. This paper uses the data collected to identify and examine common themes in the technical, critically professional and personal growth aspects of this project and to provide suggestions to guide academic partners in future university/school action research partnerships. Issues that emerged included:

- The role of a leader in such joint projects
- What is academic credibility?
- Catering for individual capabilities
- Who owns the project?
- The nature of professional development for academics
- The importance of good communication
- The establishment of professional and personal self esteem

Background to the study

The study described in this paper involved a group of three academics from a large urban university who were invited by the NSW Department of Education & Training (DET) to act as academic partners to a group of schools who were undertaking an action research project as part of a government initiative to implement a model of pedagogy designed to improve teaching and learning in their schools within the Australian Government Quality Teacher Program (AGQTP) framework. This model, NSW Quality Teaching model (Department of Education and Training, 2003), had been released in the previous year with information sessions relating to the model rationale, structure and use in school and classrooms provided to teachers in all government schools. These projects were the result of individual schools applying for funding to use action research in supporting a project designed to assist the implementation of this model in their school setting. Fifty schools were selected and academic partners assigned to each school to assist in the facilitation and mentoring of the school project. The projects were launched at a conference where all schools and academic partners were invited and the general program guidelines for the projects and action research/learning model was introduced and explained.

The three academic partners in this study worked individually with a school or set of schools in different educational and geographic settings of a large city secondary school, a country primary school and a group of nine primary schools who were feeder schools to a collegiate of three large city secondary schools. Although the schools had different projects designed to meet their individual needs, they were all using the same theoretical framework of the NSW Quality Teaching Model and methodology in the form of action research to accomplish their goals.

There has been little systematic research into the development of professional knowledge for teachers through action research or into the role academic partners can play in facilitating this process practice (Ponte, Ax, Beijaard, & Wubbles, 2004). Because of this the three academic partners decided to conduct their own action research study as a means of recording their own journeys as mentors, to provide each other with collegial support and to promote the development of their own professional knowledge. The academic partners decided to use personal reflection, collaboration and critique as the processes in their action research study.

What is reflective practice?

Ghaye and Ghaye (2001) describe reflective practice as the act of considering how to improve our thinking about what we do, the act of teaching and learning itself, and the contexts in which teaching and learning take place. It is an 'attempt to improve the existing order and pattern of things' (p. 122) and involves a meaning-making process which can help retain a sense of control over professional lives. They describe ten principles for effective reflective practice as:

- A discourse about events
- Fuelled and energised by experience
- Involving a complexity of viewpoints
- A way of accounting for ourselves
- A disposition to inquiry
- Interest-serving (there is a purpose)
- Critical
- Decoding symbolic landscapes of sites of learning
- At the interface between practice and theory
- A postmodern way of knowing. (p. 19)

The conception of the teacher, and any professional for that matter, as a reflective practitioner arose from the ideas of Dewey (1933), and has been developed more recently from the work of Habermas 1976; Schon, 1983; Van Manen, (1977, 1991, 1995); and Zeichner and Liston, (1995). Dewey (1933) argued that the reflective experience can be differentiated from the 'trial and error' experience by the fact that reflective experiences are consciously examined whereas with a 'trial and error' situation, when confusion arises a person responds without sufficient critical analysis. In a reflective situation a hypothesis is formulated, a stand is taken, and a plan of action to work towards a goal is put into place by the professional. Schon (1983) expanded upon this notion of a simple dichotomy by arguing that there was another type of professional reflection that stood somewhere between 'trial and error' and reflective practice, this being 'reflection-in-action'. According to Schon (1983) this occurs when a professional has such a practice-based knowledge of a situation, informed by a mass of previously experienced reflections on action, that responses become spontaneous, tacit and automatic. Van Manen (1977, 1991, 1995) considered reflection from a temporal perspective, identifying four types of reflection which are incorporated throughout the teaching episode:

- anticipatory reflection, which is reflection before taking action;
- active or interactive reflection, variously called reflection-in-action or contemporaneous reflection;
- recollective, retrospective reflection that helps us make sense of prior experiences;
- mindfulness or pedagogical tact.

Putting it simply, from these views comes the notion that different types of reflection occur at different times in the teaching experience. However, it is not only the timing of the reflection that is crucial in order to be a truly powerful reflective practitioner, it is also the quality of the reflection. Habermas (1976)

provides some leadership here with his notion of the technical, the practical and the critical reflection. For Habermas(1976), technical reflection is an essential component of effective teaching. It is the context for reflection on the tools of teaching practice. Practical reflection is reflection on practice based on Habermas (1976) notion of hermeneutic reflection – the communicative dimension of social interaction and thus the element of reflection that considers the efficacy of the relationships of the teaching episode. Critical reflection develops from Habermas (1976) concept of emancipation – the ability to see beyond to what might be – incorporating the ethical dimension of one’s teaching practice. Related to this but framed in slightly different terms are the ideas of Zeichner & Liston (1996) who describe five key features of a reflective teacher. According to them such a teacher;

- examines, frames and attempts to solve the dilemmas of classroom practice;
- is aware of and questions the assumptions and values they bring to teaching;
- is attentive to the institutional and cultural contexts in which they teach;
- takes part in curriculum development and school change efforts; and
- takes responsibility for their own professional development. (p.6)

They emphasise the critical aspects of reflection, rather than the technical and practical, although acknowledging the importance of reflecting on the ‘nuts and bolts’ of teaching – the workable teaching episode.

However, coming from a different field of research comes an increased awareness of the ‘emotional journey of teachers’ – a journey which does not necessarily become apparent by reflecting on the teaching episode because teachers usually try to separate the emotions from their practice and academics even more so. Hargreaves & Bascia (2000) have identified emotional understanding, the ability to read and respond quickly to others’ moods and feelings, as an essential characteristic of a good teacher. In an earlier study Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan & Hopkins (1998) characterised good teachers as more than well oiled machines, but ‘emotional, passionate beings who fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy... good teachers are passionate about ideas, learning and their relationships with students’ (p.559). Sherlock (2002) similarly argued that competencies in emotional intelligence are increasingly valued in the present world and they are of great value in the school context. Day & Leitch (2001) have examined teaching in relation to the work of Goleman (1995) on emotional intelligence, and have likewise acknowledged the importance of emotional intelligence in high-quality professional practice. Lefstein (2005) claimed that technical teaching and personal teaching are manifestations of wider worldviews and that they should not be polarized but should be seen and integrated approaches. Other professions such as nursing have established models of practice based on reflective and caring principles (Johns, 1998; Boud & Miller, 1996) with the emphasis on encouraging caring practitioners associated with the nurse/patient relationship. There is a danger that the technical aspects of teaching in schools and universities, rather than the more aesthetic and personal aspects are emphasised when reflecting on practice and so it becomes important to keep this in mind when teachers and academics reflect as part of their professional development.

What did the academic partners do?

These notions of reflection acknowledge that teachers are also learners and the process of using different kinds of reflection at different periods of the teaching cycle helps improve practice. A professional teacher is a life long learner. The three academic partners involved in the Australian Government Quality Teaching Project in New South Wales approached the mentoring project with schools as a new teaching situation and one that required them to exercise their expertise in different ways to what they had been accustomed. Consequently they decided to work with each other and use the reflective process to help develop their skills. They were familiar with various types of reflective practices and adapted them to create one that they believed would best support what they were most interested in, supporting their learning journey.

The journal format with guiding questions (see Table 1 below) was developed from an existing model of learning diaries used at the University of Newcastle to assist student teachers to reflect on their teaching (Grushka, Hinde-McLeod, & Reynolds, 2005). Each academic partner completed it before and after each school teaching/learning episode throughout the eight months of the projects. It should be noted that the

journal format allowed them to consider the technical/practical aspects of both the individual session that they were about to encounter, and the entire school project.

Table 1 - Academic Reflective Journal Guide

Academic Partner Reflective Overview				
	Individual Technical/Practical	School Technical/Practical	Whole project Critical	Personal
FOR (pre- action)	What is the task allotted to me in this session? How will I prepare? What resources will I need? Have I enough background knowledge? What skills do I need to further develop?	Have I spoken to everyone involved so we have a shared idea of what I am to do? How will I fit into the overall project? What are others doing that fits in with my work? Is what I do going to be valued? Do the teachers consider my contribution to be credible? Is this an equal partnership?	Is this really action research? Is my work one that could be dispensed with? Does the academic/school partnership really work? How supportive is my university of my efforts in this? How supportive is the DET of this? Is this an academic role? How will this activity relate to an academic career generally? Is what my school doing in line with the philosophy of what this overall project is about?	How will this activity relate to my academic career personally? How do I feel about the activity I am about to participate in? How do I feel about my relationships with the people there? What is going to be the response of the teachers to my role? What are the good parts of preparing for this? What are the bad parts?
Academic Partner Reflective Overview				
	Individual Technical/Practical	School Technical/Practical	Whole project Critical	Personal
ON (post Action)	What skills do I need to further develop? How did the activity go? Were there any difficulties? Did I have sufficient resources etc.? Did I tailor it sufficiently to the expectation of the teachers involved? Was my approach the best for the purpose? Was I clear? Had I clearly understood what the others were doing and how that related to what I was doing? Did the outcomes get achieved? How did I perform overall?	Was this session useful for the whole project? Should something have happened before this input? Should something have happened after this input? Was everyone 'on the same wavelength'?	Was this action research? How would this activity relate to an academic career generally? Was this a useful experience in terms of my university role? Are we really addressing Quality Teaching? If not-why not? If so -how? Would there have been a better way to approach this project? How useful was the role of the academic partner?	How will this activity relate to my academic career personally? How do I feel about the activity I just participated in? How do I feel about my relationship with the people there? What was the response of the teachers to my role? What were the good parts of the time spent? What were the bad parts of the time spent?

There was also opportunity to critically consider the individual session within the whole state-wide project and also to reflect on the personal, including the emotional, aspects of planning and implementing school-based professional development in an action-based research project. The journal thus provided opportunity to consider the teaching/learning episode at two levels of context (the individual school-based

site and state-wide site), at two periods of time (before and after each episode) and at two points of comprehension - the technical/practical and the emotional.

What did the journals demonstrate?

The journals were analysed and coded with reference to the overall themes previously ascertained by the three researchers after reading the journals, surveys and interviews. In terms of the sheer amount written about each theme the results from the three partners is summarized in Table 2 below:

Table 2 - Comparison of emphasis on themes by each academic partner as measured by the amount of text written on each theme.

	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 3
Most written	The nature of professional development for academics	The nature of professional development for academics	What is academic credibility?
	The role of a leader in such joint projects	What is academic credibility?	The importance of good communication
Least written	Collaborative skill building for teachers and academics	Collaborative skill building for teachers and academics	Collaborative skill building for teachers and academics
	The importance of good communication	Catering for individual capabilities	The nature of professional development for academics

It can be seen by this measure alone that the academics were primarily interested in establishing their credibility and working on their own professional development in order to advance this credibility. Related to this theme is the role of the leader in this project- establishing the various roles and responsibilities seems to have taken up a lot of the reflective time and once this had been resolved, then considering the unique academic contribution that can be made. Some of the reflections related to this role of leader were:

'there are lots of expectations of me' (Partner1)

'I still wonder if I am doing action research' (Partner1)

'I spoke to T's and I thought I sold myself quite well. I tried to allay fears that I would take over' (Partner3)

'try not to be cast as an irrelevant expert' (Partner3)

'How do I get them to evolve their own professional devt.? (Partner 3)

'I don't like being the fountain of all knowledge on QT, and metalanguage and Maths - all too much. Maybe I'm just not suited to this (Partner3).

'I think the project seems ambitious for the whole school. I would suggest that a couple of faculties only be targeted to ensure success' (Partner2)

'I think I need to be clearer on the Action Learning ideas held by the DET - maybe do some more reading to ensure the project achieves this format and aim' (Partner2)

'talk is not action research - rather resource development' (Partner2)

'a good personal exercise in how I can use generic skills' (Partner 2)

Partner 3, who had a number of school settings and a larger group of teachers to work with, wrote more about the importance of good communications than the others but that would seem to be appropriate. It can be seen by reading that partner's journal that establishing academic credibility and responsibility was at danger from lack of communication more so than with the other partners who had less variety of contexts to deal with. Partner 3 reflected:

'Being an academic partner is not just a person who can walk out but a continuing role. You really have to work hard at it and I think I am trying too hard to be everything to everyone' (Partner 3)

'they are not really clear about what they want and I am not sure what they want' (Partner 3)

'I think we were all unsure about how to do this' (Partner 3)

'Liaison is an issue. Expectations - breaking the ice with so many different players, lots of different expectations of me. It is hard to get a feel for the audience' (Partner 3)

'I haven't been to many individual schools. They haven't approached me a. How do I reach out to them? And where do I get the time?' (Partner3)

'T. said I need to give them ideas from other schools. I though I was facilitating their ideas and giving input from article, books, other schools etc. confusing isn't it?' (Partner3)

'A great learning opportunity but I am a bit "learnt out" and have to focus' (Partner 3)

Taken that establishing their own credibility and skilling themselves for the job was a strong focus for all the academic partners, then it is not surprising that the issues that least concerned them was collaborative skills building for teachers and academics. It would seem that the nature of the task necessitated each group establishing their own roles – a collaborative approach to skill building would seem to be a longer term project and one that was not able to be developed in the tight timeframe of this project. When it was mentioned it seems to be mostly related to the value of collaborative mentoring provided by the three partners working together as seen in the following comments from the journals:

'the value of working with two very experienced researchers (Partner1)

the whole idea of mentoring each other is great (Partner1)

'enjoyed this. I felt involved and researching. Away from admin. Fun to plan our own project and to work with others again' (Partner3)

'I felt overwhelmed but it was good to share it with Academic partners 1 and 3 who felt very much the same' (Partner 2)

Later in the project there appeared some realisation of the collaborative skills being developed from the interaction of academic partner and school staff member as demonstrated by the following comments:

'these are great ideas-terrific that there are people so interested' (Partner 3)

'I was inspired to see young teachers who were interested in improving their teaching, their school and their students' learning' (Partner2)

'Great session for project - stages decided how to plan in whole teams or pairs' (Partner1)

Emotionally it was a bit of a roller coaster ride for the academic partners - a ride that became less tumultuous as the project proceeded or at least as the players, tasks and expectations became clearer. It was therefore not unexpected that Partner 3 who had eight schools had the most emotionally charged journal because of the number of new and different contexts that the partner encountered. The excerpts below are indicative of change over time for each partner from the emotional point of view:

'I feel as though I haven't got much to offer them and haven't done much so far' (Partner1)

'worried about how I will be welcomed' (Partner 1)

'feeling unwelcome' (Partner1)

'I am exhausted' (Partner1)

'I am unsure how the general teachers at the school will accept me' (Partner2)

'I feel a little overwhelmed by the short time line' (Partner2)

'I felt welcomed by the team members' (Partner2)

'As I have met most of the 8 people I will be working with I am not intimidated by them' (Partner2)

'scared. How will I get on with these teachers? Will they expect too much of me? I may be out of my depth here?' (Partner3)

'I feel pretty useless' (Partner3)

'I actually felt a bit useful' (Partner3)

'Are unis irrelevant to the professions? I certainly feel that we are not valued? Marginal? T's know best?' (Partner3)

'Insecure yet again' (Partner3)

'A lot of this academic partner stuff is thinking on your feet which is easier the more you do it' (Partner3)

'Felt more relaxed' (Partner 3)

How did the role of academic partner change over time?

The role of a leader in such joint projects

All partners started with some confusion. All felt that the others in the project knew more about what the academic partners were going to do than the partners themselves. The project ideas were submitted for grant approval before the academic partners were allocated to the project and so the academic partners were initially unclear about the project dimensions - both the stated ones and the unstated ones as indicated in the following journal excerpts:

'She assures me that whole team agreed to this. I feel a bit like an outsider being told what is required of me. Not really a partnership' (Partner 1)

'they are planning and I am running behind' (Partner 3)

However, all partners worked hard to try and establish a role and to clarify expectations of them. It was obvious with all projects that there was a view of academics as experts coming in to provide input rather than a true learning partnership or learning community. The exact nature of that expertise was negotiated between the two parties. The project money was to intended provide the opportunity to incorporate the principles of Quality Teaching within some sort of curriculum focus. Partners were variously asked to provide expertise on the curriculum area, different aspects of Quality Teaching, research expertise in compiling data, liaison work and so on and schools varied quite considerably as to the degree of familiarity they had with Quality Teaching and the curriculum focus. As time passed the academic partners reported:

'my role is starting to emerge' (Partner3)

'decide the role. Work on the role. Negotiate it beforehand. Get a clear view yourself. The second time around this would be much easier!' (Partner3)

'an expert with knowledge' (Partner1)

'They seem very clear about the outcomes they wanted and how they wanted this reported. However, this was not necessarily made clear to me or my role' (Partner2)

All partners came to terms with the project and expectations of them but at the conclusion there were obviously still some reservations.

What is academic credibility?

As all partners began the project with very little information, no formal training for their role or documented role expectations their initial concern was their acceptance as part of the school research teams and projects. These difficulties and concerns were evident in all partner journal entries and demonstrated by the following excerpts:

'She warned me that some teachers were sceptical of QT and me coming. Not sure how I will be received.' (Partner1)

'Was really pleased with quality of lessons planned and way we did it' (Partner1)

'I tried to make suggestions but did not really have enough knowledge about the school project' (Partner 2).

'I felt the team were welcoming and happy to hear what I had to say' (Partner2)

'A good personal exercise in how I can use generic skills - use my previous research and analysis skills' (Partner 2).

'I tried to allay fears that I would take over' (Partner3)

'This group isn't even on Maths. They are grabbing me because I am cheap' (Partner3)

'Try not to be caste as an irrelevant expert' (Partner3)

'Criticism of me using a powerpoint' (Partner3)

'I don't like being the fountain of all knowledge on QT and metalanguage and Maths - all too much' (Partner 3)

Partners 1 and 2 seemed to find that they were able to provide academic credibility albeit in modified forms - ie school focussed. That is they seemed to establish some credibility with their teams. Partner 3 seemed to struggle with this for the entire project and it was obviously not established to her satisfaction at the end of the project. Once again it could be that the demands of catering to a diverse group of schools meant that there was not the time to bring the academic skills to bear in a satisfactory manner.

Catering for individual capabilities

The partners made more comments about aligning their own individual capabilities with the expectations of their project teams although Partner 1 was cognisant of the need to 'know the audience'.

'Warned me that many staff are experienced' (Partner 1)

'Definitely the project is helping them to reflect' (Partner 1)

Partners 2 and 3 were more reflective of their own capabilities.

'I feel I know enough about the QT model but do not have many ideas of the processes for each dimensions' (Partner 2)

'Felt that QT is such a broad area and then when they ask me things like quick assessment – where do you start?' (Partner 3)

'I feel like a bit of a fraud. I am neither the super teacher who knows all the tricks as far as teaching all this OR the super academic who knows all the research!!!' (Partner 3)

Who owns the project?

It became very clear that the schools resoundingly owned the project from the beginning and that the school project teams were expected to take on an academic partner as part of the funding arrangement for the project. It seemed that many of them complied to meet the project requirements but could see little value in this aspect. The following journal comments demonstrate how this impacted on the partners as they began the project:

'They see me as an outsider and resent change - is this action research?' (Partner1)

'I feel a little of an outsider being told what is required of me. Not really a partnership' (Partner1)

'At present I have spoken to two team members and am still a little vague as to my role in the team' (Partner 2)

'He told me he has things organised' (Partner 2)

'They are planning and I am running behind' (Partner 3)

'I think we were all unsure about how to do this' (Partner3)

'Are unis irrelevant to the professions? I certainly feel that we are not valued? Marginal? Teachers know best? (Partner 3)

The nature of professional development for academics

Partner 1 focused on the needs of her research and took with her from the project some skills she needed for this task. She also observed the other partners and tried to model aspects of their organisation.

'This fits in with my interests in Quality Teaching/Action Research' (Partner1)

'She has done lots and is very well organised. I need to organise my folders like her' (Partner1)

Partner 2 saw the research study to be an interesting professional development exercise, but also used the opportunity in the school to further research expertise in some areas.

'I think this project will help me to use my research skills and get me into a school setting and challenging ideas' (Partner 2)

'a useful activity for me as it allows me to see how a school can promote educational change and reform' (Partner2)

Partner 3 was enthusiastic about working as a research team and also about learning new things and getting involved in school-based programs. She, however, became a bit overwhelmed with it on a number of occasions and questioned her ability to be able to get so involved.

'I felt involved and researching. Away from admin.' (Partner 3)
'Great learning opportunities but I am a bit 'learnt out' and have to focus.' (Partner3)

It is obvious that professional development for academics was very much an individual exercise and that all of them took from it different aspects. They all found that this was work on top of what they normally do and all found fitting it in very difficult as demonstrated by the following journal excerpts:

'It is stressful doing this on top of my normal load' (Partner 3)
'I feel a little overwhelmed by the short timeline and the scope' (Partner 2)

The importance of good communication

All partners commented on the difficulties of communication. Partner 3 had more difficulties with this than the others because of the number of schools she had to communicate with but there was an overall feeling of exasperation with the level of communication throughout. Perhaps in view of the busy lives both teachers and academics lead this is not really solvable. The following journal excerpts identify some of these frustrations:

'It is a difficult thing to try to boost their confidence and make them feel less intimidated but not really knowing what they are doing' (Partner 1)
'I would have liked some more information before the conference to allow me to understand where this type of project sits in the scheme of things' (Partner 2)
'I have had very little feedback about my input and efforts. When I ask they say fine...I felt disappointed.' (Partner 2)
'I was surprised that one of teachers asked about terminology and the other teacher knew some answers to this but they had not talked amongst themselves.' (Partner3)
'How many? Who? How much pre-knowledge?' (Partner 3)
'Unexpected number of participants. One of the issues with this - continually never really knowing who your audience is' (Partner3)

The establishment of professional and personal self esteem

All three partners found the experience of value for their own self esteem. It was a challenge for them but one that they appeared to have been taken on board and had developed a sense of achievement. The responses below indicate change over time:

'I haven't much to offer them and haven't done much so far' (Partner 1)
'It was good to have me there to keep them on task. Stop them going down rabbit warrens' (Partner 1)

'I hope I have enough to offer ...it seems a bit daunting' (Partner 2)
'My role was vital as the staff did not have the expertise or resources' (Partner2)
'I am not intimidated by them ' (Partner2)

'Guilt- I haven't collated pre-response and so felt I had not done enough between meetings' (Partner 3)
'S. said she found me useful. What a relief!' (Partner 3)
'I have quite a lot I can work with so all the bits and pieces are starting to come together a bit' (Partner3)
'Felt more relaxed' (Partner3)

The need for collaborative skill building for teachers and academics

As previously noted this really did not feature strongly except for when the academics felt the collaborative nature of their own project assisted them to work through the issues of their roles. It did follow that the hard work in establishing academic credibility and trying to work through the communication issues could lead to future collaboration. There were genuine links made between academics and teachers.

Conclusion

The idea of academic partners working together to help mentor themselves through a challenging situation proved to be very valuable. The partners found the idea of completing reflective journals of value

both for clarifying exactly where their concerns were and also to help establish a common language to aid in group discussions. The personal aspects of working in such partnerships, including issues of establishing relationships between the people involved, were also enhanced by the mentoring experience. These journals were an extension of learning diaries used at the University of Newcastle to assist student teachers to reflect on their teaching and provided yet another dimension to our action research in that area (Grushka, Hinde-McLeod, & Reynolds, 2005). The academic partners worked hard at establishing their academic credibility and negotiating role expectations. The short time frame for the project, eight months (including school holidays), meant that going further than this into the area of a truly collaborative project was difficult. The project was led by the schools who had established the theme and the academic partners aided and assisted as best they could. Within the gamut of Quality Teaching the schools' projects were very diverse and so preparation was difficult and inter project discussions were of less value.

A report on the academic partners/school team relationship in the Australian Government Quality Teacher Program from the previous year was published after our project began (Ewing, Smith, Anderson, Gibson, & Manuel, 2004). It was fascinating to note that our strongly identified key issues were similar to findings of the previous year. The report argued for earlier meetings between academic partners and school teams to help establish roles and responsibilities and that the education faculties in universities be informed about the role that their academics were playing in order to provide some assistance with the role in terms of workload. Knowing that these recommendations were implemented to some extent and yet the key problems persisted was valuable in assessing the success of the project. Part of the answer to the difficulties identified would seem to lie in considering the relationship as a changing one. What was an issue at the beginning of a project was not necessarily an issue at the end. The key to improving the academic partner/school partner collaboration could perhaps be seen as providing different sorts of assistance at different stages including training for the role of academic partner prior to the start of the program.

Overall the most interesting information from the reflective journals of the academic partners came from examining how the task changed over time. In all areas of interest there were changes as the project rolled out. The journals demonstrated that the task of being an academic partner is quite a challenging one, in terms of the expectations and the skills that are required in order to persist, changing over time. It is also a story of human beings trying to come to grips with a multitude of situations where communication skills were crucial. To some extent it is about how individuals, in the absence of training or mentoring for academic partners, work this out.

References

- Boud, D. & Miller, N. (1996). *Working with Experience*. London: Routledge.
- Day, C. & Leitch, R. (2001) Teachers' and teacher educators' lives: The role of emotion. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, pp.403-415. Department of Education and Training. (2003). *Quality teaching in NSW public schools. A classroom practice guide*. Ryde: NSW DET, Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate.
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think*. Chicago: Henry Regnery.
- Ewing, R., Smith, D., Anderson, M., Gibson, R., & Manuel, J. (2004). *Teachers as Learners. Australian Government Quality Teacher Program Action Learning for School Teams project evaluation*. Sydney: Division of Professional Learning, Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney
- Lefstein, A. (2005). Teachers' good practice and research. Thinking about the technical and personal in teaching. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 35(3), 333-356.
- Ghaye, T. & Ghaye, K. (2001). *Teaching and Learning through Critical Reflective Practice*. London: David Fulton Publishers.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.

- Grushka, K., Hinde-McLeod, J., & Reynolds, R. (2005). Reflecting upon reflection: theory and practice in one Australian university teacher education program. *Reflective Practice*, 6(1), 239-246.
- Habermas, J. (1976). *Communication and the Evolution of Society*. Boston, Beacon Press.
- Hargreaves, A. & Bascia, N. (2000). *The Sharp Edge of Educational Change*. London: Routledge/Palmer.
- Hargreaves, A.; Lieberman, A.; Fullan, M. & Hopkins, D. (1998). *International Handbook of Educational Change*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academics Publishers.
- Johns, C. and Freshwater, D. (eds) (1998). *Transforming Nursing through Reflective Practice*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ponte, P., Ax, J., Beijgaard, D., & Wubbles, T. (2004). Teachers' development of professional knowledge through action research and the facilitation of this by teacher educators. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 20(5), 571-588.
- Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. London: Temple Smith.
- Sherlock, P. (2002). Emotional intelligence in the international curriculum. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 1(2), pp. 139-156.
- Van Manen, M. (1995). On the epistemology of reflective practice. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 1(1), 33-50.
- Van Manen, M. (1991). Reflectivity and the pedagogical moment: the normativity of pedagogical thinking and acting. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 23(6), 507-536.
- Van Manen, M. (1977). Linking ways of knowing with ways of being practical. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 6(3), 205-228.
- Zeichner, K. M. & Liston, D. P. (1996). *Reflective teaching: An introduction*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.