A professional learning partnership (PLP): connecting pre-service and practicing teachers in a technology supported environment

I. W. Olney

Follow this and additional works at: https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses

Recommended Citation

A Professional Learning Partnership (PLP): Connecting Pre-Service and Practicing Teachers in a Technology Supported Environment

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree:

Doctor of Education

from

University of Wollongong

By

Ian Olney
BSc., Dip Ed, MEd.

Faculty of Education
January 2007
Abstract

There are concerns about the adequate preparation of pre-service teachers, and the ongoing professional development of teachers in our schools, in relation to the appropriate use of information and communications technologies in the classroom.

The current professional development for practicing teachers and pre-service teachers is generally inadequate, often being in short, unrelated doses, and there is an overlap or duplication of many of these experiences. Both groups need to bridge the various gaps that are created during the preparation and as part of the ongoing professional experience that occurs in schools. These gaps relate to the changing of systems and the various expectations of the structures teachers move into.

This study investigates the design and impact of a “professional learning partnership” (PLP), that was established between pre-service teachers and practicing teachers in our schools. Within the bounds of an established one year teacher education program a small cohort of practicing teachers acted as “online mentors” for pre-service teachers, who, with minimal classroom experience, were challenged with the norms of classroom practice on their school practicums.

Information and communications technologies were used as the catalyst for discussion and set task analysis. A technology-supported environment was created online that linked these evolving groups and allowed both expected and unexpected interactions to occur. The analysis of these interactions has led to a set of recommendations that will help advise key players and teacher preparation institutions who engage in future implementations of similar partnerships. In the current context of determining teaching standards such a learning partnership will also inform the guidelines that may be necessary to allow a teacher’s career to be supported as a professional development continuum.
Declaration

I, Ian W. Olney, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor Of Education, in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Ian W. Olney
January 2007
Acknowledgements

A thesis is a long and lonely road and it has been with the support and encouragement of many people that has got me to the end.

Firstly to my wife Diane, and children Jin Hee and Yong Sam, who have endured my seemingly never ending journey, for their love, support and encouragement in a variety of ways and for keeping me in touch with the important things in our lives.

To my supervisors Professor Barry Harper and Dr Christine Brown for their tireless efforts, getting me through the highs, and especially the lows of this mammoth task. It is due to their patience, advice and positive feedback that helped me maintain my enthusiasm and direction.

I am also grateful to the members of the 2002 Graduate Diploma in Education course at University Of Wollongong and my school colleagues who have allowed me to share their experiences.

A special thank you also to my colleagues at the University of Wollongong for their encouragement and friendship throughout this study.

Thank you all.
# Table of Contents

Glossary of Terms .................................................................................................................. 7  
Key Icons Associated with Terms ....................................................................................... 7  
List of Figures ...................................................................................................................... 8  
List of Tables ....................................................................................................................... 9  

Chapter 1 - Introduction ........................................................................................................ 12  
  1.1 The Background of the Study .................................................................................. 12  
  1.2 Aims of the Study ..................................................................................................... 16  
  1.3 Research Questions ................................................................................................. 18  
  1.4 Examining the Gaps from Different Perspectives .................................................. 18  
  1.5 Approaching the Problem ....................................................................................... 22  
  1.6 Key Areas and the Professional Standard Elements ............................................. 26  
  1.7 The Research Context ............................................................................................. 32  
  1.8 Significance of the Study ....................................................................................... 35  
  1.9 Limitations ............................................................................................................... 35  
  1.10 The Structure of the Thesis ................................................................................ 35  

Chapter 2 - Literature Review ............................................................................................... 38  
  2.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................ 38  
  2.2 The Key Ideas of ‘Bridging the Gap’ Between PT and PST .................................. 40  
  2.3 Partnerships ............................................................................................................ 40  
  2.4 Mentoring ............................................................................................................... 45  
  2.5 Professional Development ...................................................................................... 55  
  2.6 ICT Integration ...................................................................................................... 61  
  2.7 Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 64  

Chapter 3 - The Study Context, Key Players and Places ...................................................... 66  
  3.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................ 66  
  3.2 The Study Context ................................................................................................. 66  
  3.3 Why this Design? .................................................................................................... 68  
  3.4 Data Collection ...................................................................................................... 69  
  3.5 The Key Players and Places .................................................................................. 83  
  3.6 The Study Context – My Perspective as the Researcher ....................................... 108
Chapter 4 – Mentor preparation for potential interaction with pre-service teachers…. 110

4.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 110
4.2 The OLM Selection Process - Interaction between the Practicing Teachers and the Researcher .......................... 110

4.3 Summary of the Selection Process ........................................................................ 119
4.4 Selection Complete - The Complete Cohort – A Face-to-Face Meeting ..................... 123
4.5 Website Development............................................................................................. 127
4.6 OLM - Online Interaction – with PSTs – Task Related ............................................. 133
4.7 Online Mentor Interaction - Summary .................................................................... 151
4.8 Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 152

Chapter 5 - Group evolution, additional support structures and spontaneous mentoring ................................................................................................. 154

5.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 154
5.2 Group Evolution ..................................................................................................... 154
5.3 Practicum – Setting the Scene for Interaction ............................................................ 156
5.4 Interactions and Support While On Practicum .......................................................... 159
5.5 PST Experiences of Use of Support ........................................................................ 170
5.6 Perceptions of Support ............................................................................................ 174
5.7 Interactions - Expected and Actual ......................................................................... 176
5.8 Interactions - Conclusion ....................................................................................... 179
5.9 Interactions – The Researcher’s Perspective ............................................................. 181

Chapter 6 - Conclusions and Recommendations .............................................................. 184

6.1 Aim / Purpose Of the Study - Review ...................................................................... 184
6.2 Study Relevance to Current Context ....................................................................... 185
6.3 Conclusions and Recommendations ...................................................................... 187
6.4 Suggestions for Further Research .......................................................................... 195

References .................................................................................................................... 197

Appendices ..................................................................................................................... 204

Appendix 1 – Online mentor Project – Study Summary .................................................. 204
Appendix 2 – Online Mentor – Brief Biography - handout .............................................. 205
Appendix 3 – Mentor Update 1 – Sent via Email ............................................................. 206
Appendix 4 – Mentor Update 2 – Sent via Email ............................................................. 207
Appendix 5 – Mentor Update 3 – Sent via Email ............................................................. 208
Appendix 6 – OLM Folder ............................................................................................. 209
Appendix 7 – Mentor Update 4 – Sent via Email ............................................................. 221
Appendix 8 – Online Mentor – ICT – Survey .................................................................. 222
Appendix 9 – Online Mentor (OLM) - Interaction Survey .............................................. 224
Glossary of Terms

CEO - Catholic Education Office
GDE - Graduate Diploma in Education
DET - Department of Education and Training
DETYA - Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs – Commonwealth of Australia.
ICT - Information and Communication Technologies
PST - pre-service teachers
PT - practicing teachers
TILT - Technology in Learning and Teaching

Key of Icons Associated with Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Icon</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![PST]</td>
<td>Pre-Service Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![PT]</td>
<td>Practicing Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![OM]</td>
<td>Online Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![PST]</td>
<td>Online posting from PST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![OLM]</td>
<td>Online posting from OLM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![PT]</td>
<td>Online posting from PT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.1</td>
<td>Segmented Development as a Teacher</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.2</td>
<td>Stage 3 - The Study Focus</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.3</td>
<td>NSW Framework Of Professional Teaching Standards</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.4</td>
<td>Connecting the Study to Teaching Standards of Practicing Teachers</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.5</td>
<td>Research areas informing the design of a PLP</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.6</td>
<td>A Professional Learning Partnership – The connection of Problem, Means and Theory</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.7</td>
<td>The Research Context</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.8</td>
<td>Possible Pathways to the GDE Course</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.1</td>
<td>Conflicting Interests</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1</td>
<td>Conflicting Interests</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.2</td>
<td>Data Collection- Stage 1 and Stage 2</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.3</td>
<td>Stage 2 Written Report Data entry example</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.4</td>
<td>Interview Template for theme identification</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.5</td>
<td>Existing ‘not designed’ Context Components</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.6</td>
<td>PST Groups Entering the GDE Course</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.7</td>
<td>Course Context for a Typical PST</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.8</td>
<td>Teaching Methods</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.9</td>
<td>School Snapshot A – Staff room and PST Distribution</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.10</td>
<td>School Snapshot B – Prac 1 – Staff room and PST Distribution</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.11</td>
<td>School Snapshot C – Prac 1 – Staff room and PST Distribution</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.12</td>
<td>School Snapshot D – Prac 1 – Staff room and PST Distribution</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.13</td>
<td>Practicum Placements During the Year 2002</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.14</td>
<td>The Online Environment – GDE Homepage</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.15</td>
<td>Integrating the Context Components Within the Year Course</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1</td>
<td>OLM – Selection and Introduction</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.2</td>
<td>OLMs – Self-rating ICT Survey</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1.1  Professional Teaching Standard - Element 6 .................................................. 29
Table 1.2  Professional Teaching Standard - Element 1 .................................................. 30
Table 2.1  Needs of Teachers .......................................................................................... 40
Table 2.2  Constraints on Teachers ................................................................................. 40
Table 2.3  Mentoring Definitions ...................................................................................... 46
Table 3.1  Interview Techniques Used in the Study .......................................................... 72
Table 3.2  Interviews with the OLMs - Interview Questions ........................................... 74
Table 3.3  Interviews With the PST - Interview Questions ................................................. 75
Table 3.4  Interviews With academic staff - Interview Questions ...................................... 77
Table 3.5  Data Summary .................................................................................................. 79
Table 3.6  Degree Range of Pre-Service Teachers ........................................................... 85
Table 3.7  Gender Distribution of PSTs Teaching Method ............................................... 90
Table 3.8  Percentage of Teachers in Each Age Group .................................................... 92
Table 3.9  Australia, Primary Teacher Supply and Demand Projections, 2000 to 2005 ........ 93
Table 3.10 Australia, Secondary Teacher Supply and Demand Projections, 2000 to 2005 ... 93
Table 3.11 Academic Staff & Support – GDE Program 2002 ........................................... 97
Table 3.12 School Snapshot Summary – Practicum 1 ....................................................... 100
Table 3.13 Range of Expected Online Activities .............................................................. 108
Table 4.1  Initial Meetings with the OLMs ..................................................................... 113
Table 4.2  OLMs from My School ................................................................................... 115
Table 4.3  OLMs from Professional Association .............................................................. 118
Table 4.4  OLMs from Personal Association ................................................................... 119
Table 4.5  Summary of the Selection Criteria for OLMs .................................................. 121
Table 4.6  Face-to-Face Meeting Agenda ........................................................................ 124
Table 4.7  OLM Interaction and Attendance ................................................................... 126
Table 4.8  Brief Biographical Information Provided by Each Mentor .............................. 129
Table 4.9  Online Task – Q1-Sample Response ................................................................. 136
Table 4.10 Online Task – Q1-Sample Response ................................................................. 136
Table 4.11 Online Task – Q1-Sample Response ................................................................. 137
Table 4.12 Online Task – Q2-Sample Response ................................................................. 138
Table 4.13 Online Task – Q2-Sample Response ................................................................. 139
Table 4.14 Online Task – Q2-Sample Response ................................................................. 139
Table 4.15 Online Tasks – Q3-Sample Response ................................................................. 140
Table 4.16 Online Tasks – Q3-Sample Response ................................................................. 141
Table 4.17 OLM-Sample Response ..................................................................................... 142
Table 4.18 OLM-Sample Response ..................................................................................... 143
Table 4.19 PST Request OLM - Sample Response ............................................................. 143
Table 4.20 OLM Response to this PST Request ................................................................. 144
Table 4.21 OLM Response to PST Request ....................................................................... 144
Table 4.22 PST Informal Referencing ............................................................................... 144
Table 4.23 Report Task Choice ......................................................................................... 146
Table 5.1 Practicum 2 Distribution ................................................................................... 158
Table 5.2 PST Contact Characteristics with the Mentors ................................................... 167
Table 5.3 Opportunity and Time Constraints - PSTs Contacting Mentors ....................... 172
Table 5.4 Possible Reasons for Non-contact with Mentors – Directly or Indirectly ............ 173
Table 5.5 Issues Affecting Interaction and Possible Solutions ......................................... 179
Table 6.1 Recommendations Relating to Course Design and Structure ............................ 189
Table 6.2 Recommendations Relating to Setup/Preparation ........................................... 191
Table 6.3 Recommendations Relating to Technology ....................................................... 192
Table 6.4 Recommendations Relating to Time/ Opportunity ......................................... 193
Table 6.5 Recommendations Relating to Interaction ....................................................... 195