

# Extending Clinical Experiences: Supporting Doctoral Students Development as University-Based Teacher Educators in PDS Context

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**ABSTRACT:** Current shifts to resituate teacher preparation with clinical practice at its core have led to renewed interest in Professional Development Schools (PDSs). As more school-university partnerships strengthen their shared commitment to clinical teacher preparation, school and university-based teacher educators must be prepared to serve in these contexts. This Case-in-Point shares the experiences of two doctoral candidates and one university faculty member who collaborated to prepare novice teacher educators for work in a PDS context. Below we describe the multitude of roles and skills required of university-based teacher educators that our experience revealed.

*NAPDS Essential Addressed: 3. Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need; 4. A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants; 8. Work by college/university faculty and P-12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings*

Recent calls from professional associations, policy reports, and accreditation agencies triggered a much-needed national shift towards clinically oriented teacher preparation (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2018; Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2013; National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010; Zeichner, 2013). The impetus for this turn, the NCATE Blue Ribbon Panel Report, called on teacher educators to resituate clinical practices in PK-12 contexts where academic learning and professional application could be purposefully intertwined. As such, the work of *clinical* teacher preparation is no longer a hallmark of boutique programs, but rather is going mainstream as colleges of education around the country are ramping up efforts to “turn teacher education upside down” (AACTE 2018; NCATE, 2010).

The shift to clinical teacher preparation necessitates teacher educators serve in boundary spanning roles: maintaining both a presence at the university and in PK-12 school sites. Yet the necessary adjustments for how we prepare teacher educators to ‘do’ the boundary spanning work of university-based teacher educators in clinical contexts have not followed. We assert that without a reorientation of the field for teacher educator preparation, efforts to transition to clinically-centered teacher education will fall flat in the absence of similarly monumental shifts in how we select, prepare, and mentor boundary spanning university-based teacher educators. Our Case-in-Point emerges from our efforts to better prepare future teacher educators for work in clinical contexts, and in this example, in PDS sites.

## Understanding the Role of a University-Based Teacher Educator

The role of the university-based teacher educator, UBTE, may take many forms, as expectations differ across programs and within different contexts (Burns & Badiali, 2016; Cuenca, 2010). For example, in some university models, the UBTEs serves as a supervisor and must focus explicitly on giving feedback to teacher candidates in a ‘drive by’ format. In others, the UBTE must also build relationships within the school building of the teacher candidate that he or she is supervising. And still in others (e.g., PDSs), the UBTE, in addition to supervision responsibilities, might meet with multiple PK-12 stakeholders and collaborate on professional development and inquiry-oriented projects within the school community—along with dedicating time to build strong reciprocal relationships. In PDSs, UBTE’s become an integral part of the learning community at a school (AACTE, 2018; Burns, 2012).

Researchers note a lack of attention to the preparation of educators who become UBTEs (Cuenca, 2010; Bullock, 2012; Slick, 1998), particularly to work in clinical PDS contexts. Perhaps at the heart of the problem is the assumption that all teachers, or educators, make good teacher educators (Cuenca, 2010). However, many UBTEs simply ‘fall into it’ and there is a “lack of systematic preparation for teacher educators” (Mayer et al., 2011, p. 258) to work in robust clinical partnership settings. Below we describe our efforts to move past simply preparing doctoral candidates for traditional supervision and towards developing a more nuanced understanding of what it means to be a university-based teacher educator in a school/university

partnership. Similar to Burns, Jacobs, and Yendol-Hoppey (2016), we focused on the functions of a UBTE beyond evaluation of teacher candidates and address the other significant functions.

## Understanding the UBTE Internship Structure

Our work is situated in a teacher education doctoral program at a large, research-intensive university in the southeast. Our efforts emerged from a shared doctoral course experience in which the second author was the instructor and the first and third authors were students. The course entitled *Working in Schools: Exploring Boundary Spanning Teacher Education Roles* focused on the literature, policies, roles, and models of clinical practice. As a result of our experiences in the course, we created a follow up doctoral internship experience that focused on putting the principles of the course into practice as UBTEs.

Because the second author also served as a UBTE in two professional development sites (PDS) supervising 10 interns, this created a space for a scaffolded internship. Each of the two elementary school sites housed five teacher candidates ranging in grades K-5. The experienced UBTE was the only university-based educator at each PDS site. The first site, which was home to several of the program's graduates who turned into school-based mentors, was a long-standing partnership that the UBTE had dedicated several years to cultivate. This led to strong buy-in from all school-based stakeholders and allowed for more creative opportunities. The second site, a brand new PDS partnership, had been initiated by the principal's desire to become a PDS site. School-based mentors were new to the PDS experience, but experienced teachers, and were learning how to effectively work with teacher candidates. The experienced UBTE was working to develop a strong partnership and gain school-based buy-in.

The internship structure we designed used a gradual release of responsibilities model. To begin, we read and discussed several key articles and readings. At their respective PDS sites, doctoral students, referred to below as novice teacher educators, began by shadowing the UBTE to observe, reflect, and debrief on the expectations of the role. During these initial site visits, introductions were made to all stakeholders. Once a sense of trust had been established, the novice teacher educators began observing and interacting with the PDS triad, under the guidance of the UBTE. In the last phase, the novice teacher educators began taking on more supervision responsibilities by independently observing and working with mentor teachers and teacher candidates.

It is important to note that throughout the process we reflected, debriefed, and discussed the role and the interactions that were observed across the two PDSs. The differences between the two sites presented unique opportunities for the novice teacher educators to understand the complex roles of working in clinical contexts. In the first site, the UBTE had been working at the school for four years. While the school itself was larger (over 700 students), it was apparent that relationships had been built

with the administration, teachers, and staff. The UBTE felt very comfortable at this school. All stakeholders understood routines, responsibilities, and expectations. Mentor teachers had been working with the UBTE for several years and knew how to navigate the relationships with teacher candidates. Several program graduates worked at the school and continued professional development with the UBTE. Work at the second, much smaller PDS site had just begun for the UBTE. As a result, mentor teachers were new to mentoring candidates. The school, leadership, and staff were all learning how to successfully function as a PDS and support novice teacher development. The UBTE was less familiar with the site and spent more time developing relationships in order to strengthen the partnership. This provided the novice teacher educators with two different perspectives: working in an established relationship and navigating the beginnings of a new partnership.

## Outcomes of the UBTE Internship

The internship experience under the guidance of an experienced UBTE afforded the novice teacher educators an opportunity to more fully develop their understanding of the role and practice the required technical and practical skills in a scaffolded manner. Reflecting upon our work, we recognized the importance of novice teacher educators understanding the complexity of their work and the different roles required in PDS contexts. More specifically, we suggest that a PDS UBTE must be able to (a) manage time and schedules for multiple stakeholders, (b) create learning opportunities that allow for the application of knowledge, (c) observe and confer with teacher candidates as well as their school-based mentors, and (d) navigate and cultivate the various perspectives of PDS stakeholders to grow and sustain the partnership. In order to properly implement these skills, the UBTE has to take on several roles. Although many more likely exist, we observed these five roles during our UBTE internship and highlight our experiences with each below. Table 1 defines these five roles and highlights strategies we used to scaffold doctoral student knowledge and experience with each.

Through this experience, we quickly learned that in order for a UBTE to navigate myriad responsibilities in a PDS, they needed to be efficient time managers. For example, despite other duties as a university faculty member, the UBTE spent one day a week at each PDS partnership site in order to be present, engaged in the learning, and available for stakeholders. Even with a dedicated day in the PDS site, the novice teacher educators found it overwhelming to consider how they might simultaneously attend to the coaching and supervision needs of the teacher candidates while also supporting mentors, administration, and grade level teams. The internship experience facilitated the novice teacher educators developing understanding of the expectations of the role and the recognition that engaging in professional development opportunities for all, meeting the teacher candidate's individual needs in their particular PDS, and building and maintaining relationships across all stakeholders required significant time, particularly as

Table 1. Defining and Providing Scaffolded Experiences for the Five Roles of a UBTE

	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Example Scaffolded Experiences for Novice UBTEs</i>
<b>Time manager</b>	<i>Allocating the appropriate amount of time to work with all stakeholders while maintaining university responsibilities.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities to shadow experienced UBTE</li> <li>• Development of online resources to support organization (i.e. Edthena, Google documents, etc.)</li> <li>• Time to practice time management during the second half of the internship</li> </ul>
<b>Cheerleader</b>	<i>Providing adequate emotional support for stakeholders and encouraging motivation.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities to observe, ask questions, and reflect on one-on-one meetings of the experienced UBTE with teacher candidates</li> <li>• Various readings on providing appropriate support in mentorship</li> <li>• Time to practice providing emotional support with teacher candidates during the second half of the internship independently</li> </ul>
<b>Mediator</b>	<i>Serving as the gateway for positive conversations between various stakeholders in order to provide the best experience for teacher candidates.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities to attend triad meetings and meetings between various stakeholder groups</li> <li>• Being provided the opportunity to lead triad meetings with a debrief with experienced UBTE</li> <li>• Time to practice facilitating as a mediator interpedently and debriefing as an internship group after to share experiences</li> </ul>
<b>Confidante</b>	<i>Remaining a neutral party for all stakeholders and providing opportunities for honest dialogue.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities to observe, ask questions, and reflect on confidentiality with experienced UBTE</li> <li>• Monthly meetings to discuss specific moments and review when confidentiality should/shouldn't be honored</li> <li>• Time to practice the role of confidante with teacher candidates</li> </ul>
<b>Coach</b>	<i>The process of providing appropriate feedback to teacher candidates in order to support growth and metacognition.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to observe experience UBTE coach teacher candidates</li> <li>• Shared reading of a coaching text, in a book club style, to discuss appropriate coaching</li> <li>• Time to practice, with reflection and debrief, effective coaching</li> </ul>

compared with their prior knowledge of the work of traditional university supervisors.

The internship experience highlighted the role of the UBTE as a cheerleader for stakeholders across the partnership. The novice educators quickly realized that working with teacher candidates is more than providing instructional feedback. Rather it often involved providing emotional support. For example, during the internship, the novice teacher educators observed the UBTE supporting a teacher candidate who lacked confidence and needed additional encouragement and support as she took on more responsibilities. Conversely, they observed the UBTE support another teacher candidate who was thriving, but questioned if she wanted to be a teacher at all. The relationships built as a UBTE during the extended time in a clinical PDS context played a key role in providing proper psychological support and encouragement.

The internship experience also highlighted the role of the UBTE as a mediator and confidante among PDS stakeholders. In weekly meetings the UBTE met with and listened to the insights of mentors, teacher candidates, and school administrators. Often, whether meeting with individuals or groups, the UBTE would hear about an event from multiple perspectives. This required the UBTE to often function at the macro level—seeing situations at the PDS site from 10,000 feet, while simultaneously engaging with each of the stakeholders at the surface level.

Finally, the novice teacher educators recognized the practical necessity of learning coaching skills. The internship experience created opportunities for scaffolding novice teacher educators into the process of providing feedback. This began with structured observations of feedback cycles. Then through the gradual release of responsibility, the novice teacher educators began to practice being able to provide substantial feedback that supported teacher candidates' reflective processes. The internship afforded the novice teacher educators the opportunity to experience feedback in a variety of forms (formal, informal, electronic, face to face, video based) with a knowledgeable other. What the novice UBTE's quickly realized is that coaching can take many forms, it takes time and scaffolding to develop, and is premised on strong, positive relationships.

## Conclusions

Preparing teachers through clinical practice requires a UBTE that is skilled, knowledgeable (Burns & Badiali, 2016), and able to take on several roles. Our internship experience suggests, like Cuenca (2010), that a UBTE must learn and utilize different skill sets and enact different roles in order to be effective. During the internship experience, the novice teacher educators quickly recognized the time, effort, and management of relationships required of UBTEs, such as Bullock (2012) suggests in his self-study. The internship provided an opportunity to more deeply understand the importance of building relationships with all

stakeholders for the success of the PDS. Because the internship was situated in two PDS sites in different stages of partnership development, the experience highlighted how year-to-year continuity at a site facilitates trust and strong, reciprocal relationships. Finally, the internship experience revealed the importance of developing the technical supervision skills and practical skills required of UBTEs.

While limited research highlights the intricacies of the role of a UBTE (Steadman & Brown, 2011), our inquiry helped us further understand the expectations of the role. With the turn towards more clinically-centered approaches in teacher education (Dennis et al., 2017), we must reconsider how teacher educators are prepared to work in these contexts as boundary spanning teacher educators. The work is complex, and supporting novice teacher educators requires working side by side with them as they learn to connect theories to the practicality of today's schools (NCATE, 2010). This situation, in turn, necessitates the need for novice teacher educators to have ample time to prepare for their new role, observe UBTEs in their context, and practice with guidance from experts (Cuenca, 2010).

“Sit and gets will no longer suffice for fostering the extensive knowledge and skills needed to enact the PST (Preservice Teacher Supervision) supervision in an era of increased clinical education and school-university collaboration” (Burns et al., 2016, p. 68). Our experience suggests that all university-based teacher educators would benefit from on-going observations of experienced UBTEs, review and reflection of the role, and more targeted practice with more experienced UBTEs just like novice supervisors. As these experiences are powerful and complex (Bullock, 2012), perhaps universities need to re-evaluate the who and the how all university-based supervisors are professionally developing and working with PDS sites. SUP

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