



Is Authentic Cross-Cultural Collaboration Possible Between Universities and Public Schools Within a Professional Development School Model? Perceptions From the Field

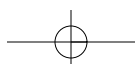
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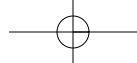
ABSTRACT: In 2003, a state in the Rocky Mountain region combined the concept of partner schools (Goodlad, 1993) and the model of a professional development school (Holmes Group, 1986, 1995) to develop four university public school partnerships. This study asked two guiding questions: Is authentic cross-cultural collaboration possible between a university and public school districts? What are the university faculty's and mentor teachers' perceptions of this work? Interviews were conducted regarding participants' perceptions of university faculty's roles in the partnerships, as well as the challenges in and results of working in a professional development school. An interorganizational relationship framework adapted from Rice (2002) was used in data analysis to frame the results. The findings have implications for teacher educators and for their public school counterparts. These findings illuminate how critical it is to spend time preparing for, and providing ongoing support of, this collaboration.

Over the last 3 years, the State of Wyoming combined the concept of partner schools (Goodlad, 1993) and the model of a professional development school (PDS; Holmes Group, 1986, 1995) to develop four university–public school partnerships. These partnerships evolved from (1) a traditional student teaching model where preservice teachers were placed in more than 40 school districts around the state for their 16-week residency and had little contact with university personnel to (2) a collaborative model where university faculty and mentor teachers work together to provide rich field-based experiences for student teachers in four school districts. This evolution was prompted by our College of Education's membership in the National Network of Educational Renewal

and in the maintenance of our accreditation from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Our study investigates the network's charge for faculty to adopt new roles that span the boundaries between the university and the public school. People encompassing such a role are described as hybrid educators (Clark, Foster, & Mantle-Bromley, 2005; Goodlad, 2004). They work "in multiple communities of practice [and] have to understand the perspective, expectations, and constraints of each culture, and they must appreciate the differences" (Clark et al., 2005, p. 7). The Joint Task Force for Urban/Metropolitan Schools (2004) defines these educators as boundary spanners—those who can "bridge both philosophically and in their practice the missions of the differ-





ent partnership member institutions, organizations and agencies” (p. 30).

As such, the purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of the collaborators in university–public school partnerships in a state in the Rocky Mountain region. Several past studies have focused on PDS work in urban school settings, with few on PDS models in rural settings. Rice (2002) calls for research on the collaboration process in PDSs in general, with recommendations for research on PDSs in rural areas. This study had three primary focus questions, asked of both the university faculty and the public school mentor teachers: “What is your perception of the university faculty’s role in the PDS?” “What have been the challenges working in the PDS, if any?” and “What have been the results of working in the PDS?” Our study chose to focus on the university faculty’s role in the PDSs because there is little research on such roles in university–school partnerships (White, Deegan, & Alleksaht-Snider, 1997).

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

In this section, we describe the evolution and effectiveness of PDS models. We then situate and examine faculty’s roles within PDSs, and last, we discuss how professional cultures within a partnership interact to form interorganizational relationships that highlight the importance of trust, collaboration, and choice within these relationships.

PDSs: Evolution and Effectiveness

In the mid-1980s, the term *professional development school* was invented and coined by the Holmes Group (1986). At the time, many educational researchers called for reform in teacher education preparation. The PDS idea was new, with origins in laboratory schools on university campuses (Abdal-Haq, 1998; Book, 1996). Darling-Hammond (1994) posits that PDSs are an imperative. Teitel (2004), in his work on the effectiveness of PDSs, describes them as “poten-

tially the most powerful innovation” in teacher education reform (p. 1).

University Faculty Roles

The Holmes Group (1995) argues that participating universities need to develop a new type of faculty—one that is as “at home working in the public school as on the university campus” (p. 2). The National Network of Educational Renewal outlines four areas for faculty to focus upon in their PDS work. These areas, or functions, are parallel to the four shared goals of PDSs: teacher preparation, professional development for all stakeholders, renewal of curriculum and instruction, and research/inquiry. These areas for faculty work are much different from traditional foci.

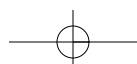
Professional Cultures and Shifting Identities

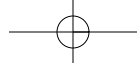
In a PDS, the different professional cultures of universities and public schools must collaborate in new ways to realize their goals. This is in comparison to cooperative relationships. Although collaborative and cooperative relationships are on the same continuum, Johnston and Kirschner (1996) differentiate collaboration and cooperation:

Collaboration is often confused with cooperation. Collaboration entails mutuality and equity throughout the project while cooperation allows for more differentiated responsibilities and roles. . . . Collaboration is not an end in itself, but a way of relating and working together. . . . It cannot be mandated; it must be built . . . with relationships. (p. 146)

Van de Ven and Ring (2006) posit that relationships built among people from different organizations must increasingly rely on trust between individuals. Trust is what bonds individuals from different organizations.

Ginsberg and Rhodes (2003) call for fundamental cultural changes in university and school cultures. These cultures can easily clash, however (Holmes Group, 1995). Rice





(2002) describes an inherent tension between schools and universities. Valli (1999) notes that the differences between the cultures of schools and universities are obvious and deeply embedded in everyday practices: “The historical trajectories of the two institutions parallel the split between theory and practice, reflection, and action” (p. 3).

Interorganizational Relationship Framework

Williams (2002) argues that interorganizational frameworks “dominate the resolution of complex societal problems” (p. 103). In education, PDSs are seen as an interorganizational relationship that has the power to reform teacher education (Johnston & Kirschner, 1996). Data analysis in this study was based on an interorganizational relationship framework adapted from Rice (2002). We used Rice’s framework to build on her metaevaluation of the role of collaboration in PDSs. Rice based her framework on the field of business management sources (Alter & Hage, 1993; Van de Ven, 1976). The framework categorizes components of a collaboration within an interorganizational relationship as follows:

- situational factors*: the conditions in the environment that must be present;
- structural dimensions*: the administrative arrangements that define relationships;
- process dimensions*: the flow of the organization; and
- relational dimensions*: how individual members interact with one another.

Method

With institutional review board approval, we began our study in the spring of 2006. Specifically, we investigated the perceptions of teacher education faculty (elementary) and mentor teachers (public school) regarding PDS work—namely, the university’s roles, the challenges,

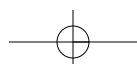
and the results—since the statewide implementation of the university–school PDSs 3 years earlier.

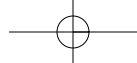
Research Settings

The four PDS sites were different, varying in distance from the university, in the size of the town in which each was located, in ethnic diversity of the community, and in median household income. Each difference is discussed in turn.

Distance from the university. Our large rural state has been described as one small town with long streets. With four PDS sites in the state, travel is an issue. The farthest PDS site from the university is 295 miles away; another site was 240 miles away. On different weekdays, the university faculty teams flew into these communities on a six-passenger university plane; so, although the distance is significantly greater than what most faculty in other universities travel to visit student teachers and the public school mentors, our university faculty are still able to spend approximately 1 day a week in the field and be back home at the end of the day. Although the air travel is extremely time efficient (versus travel by automobile), the winter weather sometimes grounds the plane. The faculty team schedules 11 PDS site visits during the spring semester but usually ends up making six or seven of them because of plane scheduling conflicts or the weather. The other two PDS sites are within driving distance of the university (fewer than 50 miles away). Travel to these sites is by university car or personal vehicle. The main travel challenge that confronts the university team is encountering hazardous weather while crossing an 8,600-foot elevation mountain pass along the route.

PDS site demographics. The sites had different demographics. The towns of the four PDS sites varied from 1,455 to 53,000 residents. The median household income ranged from \$24,762 to \$39,607. The PDS school sites also differed in their racial makeup, with percentage of Caucasian students ranging from 5% at one site to 96% at another.





Data Collection

An ethnographic interview methodology was used to gather empirical data of participants' lived experiences and perceptions related to university-school partnerships. University faculty and mentor teachers were interviewed using a semistructured format with three guiding interview questions, thereby allowing for opportunities for the participants to shape the content of the interview—as mentioned earlier, “What is your perception of the university faculty’s role in the PDS?” “What have been the challenges working in the PDS, if any?” and “What have been the results of working in the PDS?” The interviews focused on the participants’ perceptions as shaped by the cultures in which they worked and through their first-hand encounters; that is, the interviews elicited the participants’ meanings of events and behaviors (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The research was descriptive, to better reflect the nature of the perceptions and to document the evolution of the relationships between the university faculty and the K–6 teachers.

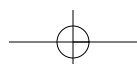
University faculty. The coauthors individually interviewed the 12 university faculty who participated in the PDSs. Because all faculty were well known to the authors and to one another, an individual interview format was chosen to ensure that each participant’s contributions would be held in confidence. Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour. Each faculty member is a part of a three-person university team that teaches a cohort of preservice teachers in the fall semester of the students’ senior year. Four faculty teams were interviewed. Each faculty member teaches a 5-hour methods course to the same cohort. The students carry a 15-hour methods load of coursework. Faculty members represent different disciplines—humanities, literacy, and math/science. Each team continues its interaction with this same cohort of preservice teachers, as well as their mentor teachers, in a PDS site during the spring semester (i.e., during student teaching). The university teams include four tenured senior faculty members, four junior faculty members not yet tenured, three adjunct faculty members, and

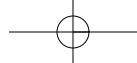
one doctoral student. There are six males and six females, all Caucasian.

The tenure-track faculty participating in the PDSs typically have a 15-credit teaching load, split between two semesters, with the PDS work counting for 5 credits. All PDS university faculty have the same academic expectations as their non-PDS colleagues—65% teaching responsibility, 25% research and writing, and 10% service and advising. Five credit hours are defined as the equivalent of one full day involved in PDS work. For the local PDS sites, *one full day* has been interpreted to mean a schedule of approximately 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in our partner schools, 1 day every week. That 1-day-a-week commitment is more significant for those faculty members who travel to distant sites. They arrive at the local airport, outside of town, at 7:00 a.m., and their flight returns to town by 5:00 p.m. Flight time is included in the PDS commitment, thereby shortening the actual time in schools and classrooms. Even with the variation in time spent in classrooms, this design honors the request by our public school partners to have university faculty members physically present in districts and their schools.

To supplement site visits, distance-based collaborations have been explored, such as the use of web-based video conferencing between student teachers in the field and university faculty members on campus, using laptops and cameras provided by the university. Other methods include e-mail journaling, video supervision via webcam, and online threaded discussions. Some of the challenges encountered using these technologies were related to the inability to bridge firewalls between public schools and the university.

Mentor teachers. Mentor teachers were interviewed in a focus group format lasting approximately 2 hours. They were asked to share their experiences and PDS perceptions by responding to the same three questions as the faculty. A focus group interview was chosen as a format with the mentor teachers, for several reasons: to create a setting in which the participants would feel comfortable with their peers, to enable the researchers to interview several





people at once and so witness their interaction, to empower the mentor teachers given that the interviewer was a university faculty member, and to create an opportunity for the researchers to gather not only quality information but a large quantity of information (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

PDS sites had three to five elementary schools participating in the university–school partnership, with an average of 20 preservice teachers at each site. Each focus group interview had representation from all participating elementary schools, with a total of 34 mentor teachers from four focus groups: 33 female and 1 male; 30 Caucasian, 3 Native American, and 1 Latino.

All interviews were audiotaped by the researchers (with permission from the participants) and transcribed by an independent party. Member checks were conducted by sending all interviewed faculty a draft of the manuscript (for their feedback) and by providing mentor teachers a compilation of the results using a Reader's Theater format (Rasinski, 2003). Both the faculty and the mentor teachers reported that the information presented was accurate.

Data Analysis

Content analysis of the data occurred in three phases. First, the two researchers analyzed the data separately and inductively, noting salient themes as they emerged. The researchers did a comparative analysis of their separate themes, discussing differences and similarities and collapsing smaller themes into broader categories. During this constant comparison, the researchers noted that the incidents were generating theoretical properties of the interorganizational relationship framework utilized in studies investigating various kinds of partnerships (Alter & Hage, 1993; Rice, 2002; Van de Ven, 1976). The framework defines four components: situational factors, structural dimensions, process dimensions, and relational dimensions. For this study, we have defined the situational factors to be the tangible elements in the environment that must be present for collaboration to occur. The structural dimen-

sions encompass the organizational plan and support system for collaboration between the university and elementary school cultures. The process dimension refers to the information flow—that is, the communication between PDS partners through a variety of media. The relational dimension illustrates how university–school partners interact with each other, build relationships, and deal with challenges.

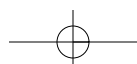
The second phase of data analysis involved the researchers individually reanalyzing the data, using the interorganizational relationship framework to categorize the emergent themes within each framework area. They then discussed their analyses, comparing their differences. In the final phase, the researchers analyzed the data a third time, actively searching for counterexamples to verify conclusions. As a result, eight emergent themes were categorized within the framework, each discussed in turn.

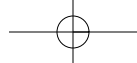
Results

This section shares the eight themes that were identified via the interorganizational relational framework (Alter & Hage, 1993; Rice, 2002; Van de Ven, 1976) used to analyze the data. The focus is on the perceptions of the university faculty members and the mentor teachers participating in the four PDS sites in a rural state regarding the three focus questions: “What is your perception of the university faculty’s role in the PDS?” “What have been the challenges working in the PDS, if any?” and “What have been the results of working in the PDS?” We believe that the findings are applicable to teacher educators and others who are creating, designing, and implementing PDSs. The following eight themes are organized in four categories based on Rice’s (2002) framework.

Situational Factors

Theme 1: Collaborative posturing—Is it authentic? Inconsistencies were identified between the university faculty’s and mentor teachers’





perceptions of the collaborative efforts—or lack thereof. Faculty reported being respectful when entering the elementary school culture—for example, waiting to be invited into teachers' classrooms, letting student teachers decide if they would like to be observed, and so on. In turn, mentor teachers perceived this behavior as faculty's being uninterested, uncommitted, or unwilling to do the work involved in a partnership. The expectation from the mentors was that the faculty would come into their classrooms on a regular basis, provide written feedback to the student teachers, and facilitate three-way conferences among the student teacher, mentor teacher, and the faculty member. Some mentor teachers shared an expectation of the university faculty's presenting professional development opportunities. Although these collaborative activities may have never been discussed, they became an expectation of the mentor teachers. The faculty's perceptions were remarkably different. They thought that they had created a presence in the schools, that they were supporting the mentor teachers, and that they shared a sense of well-being between the two cultures owing to the visibility of and accessibility to the university faculty. A university faculty member's remarks were similar to those of other faculty colleagues:

I have a really well-integrated understanding of what it means to be a partner in a learning community and I have a pretty good understanding of bad examples of that. I work here and I don't push. I see what I can do. . . . I have avoided conflict. I put everything else I was doing on the back burner. I mean in five years I might have had two publications, and they were collaborative. . . . I came in and worked. When people saw the pattern of my behavior, they came to respect me—adults, and kids, and aides, and bus drivers, and people behind the desk at the office started to greet me, you know, and smiled at me.

The unanimous perception from the mentor teachers at that same site tells a different story:

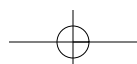
There is no collaboration—they only come two or three times in the semester and sometimes they're just popping their head in and giving me a "thumbs-up" to see how things are going. I think they must be doing things with other teachers and maybe even work for the district administration, like in-service workshops for the secondary teachers or something, that's what I heard.

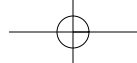
Theme 2: Previous relationships and attitudes—Advantage or disadvantage? The results indicate a disconnect between the faculty's perceptions of previous university-school relationships and the perceptions of the mentor teachers. University faculty reported being surprised by the lack of trust generated from past relationships, expecting that a stronger foundation had been built and that there would be some carryover from year to year, even school to school, as PDS status expanded to other schools in the district. Faculty from two sites commented:

My first thought was, you know, I'd been here [in the elementary school] for 2 years, and the people that know me should surely know that we weren't going to pull a fast one on them, but then I had to think—obviously, they didn't know, because they did think that we had pulled a fast one on them.

I had a difficult time—for me [this elementary school] was the path of no resistance. I had established relationships, a clear sense of collaboration, and my expertise in what I could contribute [while conducting grant work before the PDSs were established in the district]. In [the new PDS schools], it was starting from scratch. There was always a sense that the district office wanted to know what we were doing, kind of direct what we were doing.

The disconnect between the faculty and the mentor teachers became apparent with strong evidence illuminating the faculty's beginning realization of their false sense regarding the strength and depth of past relationships. Although faculty expressed concern and





surprise over the lack of trust, the mentor teachers articulated continuing dissatisfaction with “the university”—dissatisfaction that predated the PDS work yet presented obstacles in the current work. (Mentor teachers from all four sites referred to the faculty as “the university.”) These past relationships appeared to affect the ease with which new relationships were formed in the PDSs between university faculty members and public school teachers.

Theme 3: Student teachers—Will their placements occur collaboratively, and will they come well prepared? Data from the mentor teachers’ and university faculty’s interviews revealed a recognition regarding the benefits of collaborating on the placements of student teachers for their residency semester. This process was new to most mentors and to all university faculty. Both partners saw this as an important role and expectation. One mentor said, “We were able to make sure that students were placed where they needed to be placed. I think that helped from the get-go with some problems because [mentors] got the students they helped choose.” Not only was there a clear expectation from the faculty and the mentor teachers that both groups would be involved in the placement process of student teachers, but the partners at all four PDS sites across the state confirmed the expectation that the student teachers would come into their residency semester well prepared by the university faculty. Data from the mentor teachers and university faculty at three sites reveal a positive feeling toward the quality of the student teachers whom they worked with during the student teaching semester. The following comments are representative of mentor teachers at two of the three sites:

The past 2 [student teachers] that I’ve had, and I’ve had 10 throughout my thirtysome years of teaching—and I’ve had them from four different universities, but these kids these last two years have probably been the best I’ve ever had.

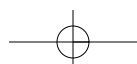
The student teachers are just great. They come in knowing so much and, for the most part, are so well prepared, it’s fun to have them in class. I learn from them.

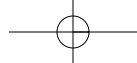
Although well-prepared student teachers emerged as a clear expectation from the faculty and the mentor teachers from all four sites, mentor teachers at one site were critical of the quality of the student teachers who had been available for placement in their PDS schools over the last 3 years (i.e., during the implementation of the PDS). Faculty questioned the equity in the pools of student teachers available for placement among the four PDS sites. Student teachers had the opportunity to rank their choices of placement (first, second, and third choice). All must also meet the criteria established by the university’s teacher education program (grade point average, course completion, etc.). In the past, two of the larger districts added criteria (e.g., higher cumulative grade point averages, especially in math and literacy course work) and so rejected any files of student teachers who failed to meet them. The rejected files then went into the student teacher pools in the more remote (i.e., rural) areas of the state, where the pools were already small. This created some inequities in the quality of the cohorts, but that issue was addressed in the 2006–2007 academic year. Specifically, PDS university faculty remedied it by reviewing all student teaching applications together (using the same placement criteria) and by forming balanced diverse cohorts, which were then brought to the school districts for collaborative grade-level placement.

Structural Dimensions

For this study, we modified the definition of the structural dimensions to refer to those arrangements established (or not established) between university and school personnel in a PDS (Rice, 2002). These arrangements traditionally happen between administrators of the College of Education (and/or administrators of the teacher education program) and the public school district.

Theme 4: Administration—Support or obstacle in creating a partnership? The interview data from the mentor teachers and the university faculty revealed the difference that administrative support (or lack thereof) makes in wel-





coming people from the outside into one's culture and so creating a climate that is conducive for cross-cultural collaboration. Faculty expressed frustration with the university administration as well as with the challenges that an unwelcoming school administration can present. They also acknowledged administrators' power in removing barriers, as illustrated by the following quote:

Another challenge I felt in the district we worked in was the rigidity of the upper [public school] administration and them standing in the way of getting the mentor teachers at the table so they could have a voice in the PDS activities. Even our own [university] administration was an obstacle at the beginning. Decisions were made at the upper administration level at the university and at the district level and then it was up to the mentor teachers and the university faculty to carry out whatever was agreed upon, and that wasn't always communicated to us.

In the PDS model that our rural state developed, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been initiated by administrators of the College of Education, with input for revision from the upper administrators in the school districts. There are four separate but similar MOUs, one for each PDS site. The first MOUs comprised a 3-year agreement that ended in spring 2006; new 4-year MOUs have been signed by College of Education administrators and public school administrators. The MOUs specify the details of the university-school partnership, such as the amount of the mentor teachers' stipends, the frequency of faculty visits, and the general kinds of work in which the mentor teachers and faculty might be engaged. The first MOUs were created strictly between the College of Education administrators and the public school administrators—that is, without faculty or mentor teacher input. Faculty did not see them before beginning their 3-year commitment in the PDSs, nor did the mentor teachers. These latest MOUs have had limited input from the faculty and the mentor teachers, with faculty at only two sites reporting opportunities to give their input and with no mentor teachers' input so-

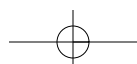
lited by College of Education administration or by public school administrators. The following quotes are sample reactions from the mentor teachers (first quote) and the faculty (second quote) regarding the MOUs:

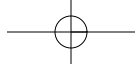
Honestly, a new MOU's been signed? Another memorandum of understanding has been signed for 4 years? Seeing it would help. When did this happen?

We need to involve the school district people more. I don't know; see I'm in the dark about a lot of things because I'm not traveling in the leadership kinds of circles, but these MOUs, right? Who drafted these? Were they done by [College of Education administrators in the] office at night?

Faculty and mentor teachers shared a need to have the administrative arrangements more transparent, particularly when considering that they are the stakeholders who are implementing and living the details of the day-to-day, week-to-week collaboration. In the early stages of implementing PDSs, much of the confusion and much of the participants' feeling disregarded was simply unintentional and reflective of the growing pains of creating a new way of doing business.

Theme 5: Lack of formalization—What are the parameters? The university-school partnerships seemed to stay afloat because many of the mentor teachers had mentored student teachers long before the PDS model was implemented, so they continued to do what they had always done. The faculty were evolving in their new roles in a newly cocreated culture and thus seemed to rely on the school personnel to inform them if there were problems or unmet expectations, although no one took the initiative to call a meeting and bring issues to the table that had been smoldering. Given the opportunity to share perceptions regarding the roles, challenges, and results of the PDS work, the mentor teachers and faculty had a lot to say, and much of it centered on the lack of formalizing the partnership relationships—determining roles, schedules, establishing procedures, and so on. After some discussion among the mentor teachers





during the interview—specifically, regarding their disappointment in the university faculty and their expectations not being met—one mentor said,

I got to thinking toward the end of the semester; I thought, I don't think I know what [the university faculty's] responsibilities are, and I have no clue how busy they are. What's happening in my classroom is not what I expected to happen, but maybe they're stretched so thin that we need to all look at this together, because I don't know.

In the early stages of implementing the PDS model, faculty and mentor teachers alike were eager, optimistic, and perhaps a little naïve about how they would sustain long-term collaboration in our rural state. The results from this study underscore the importance of formalizing a concrete plan of action for the interactions between the partners. The results show the need for articulating expectations; without that being done, there were disappointments and feelings of unmet expectations—even when the expectations had not been formalized. Faculty echoed the mentor teachers' perceptions of not knowing the parameters for this partnership:

The lines blurred; things weren't clear. Again, it boils down to we didn't have a schedule of when we were going to be in the buildings . . . and we had a rough time figuring out what the roles were.

I'm thinking we could have a discussion at the end of the methods semester [before student teaching] and talk about "What is it you guys want from us?" . . . Everybody at least knows ahead of time, up front, what to expect.

Process Dimension

In our study, the process dimension refers to the flow of the organization, as evident in the communication between and among participants—that is, the flow of information. Information flow encompasses communication about the

participants and their work in the partnership, as transmitted through a variety of media (e.g., face-to-face interaction, e-mail, signs, telephone calls, meetings, and secondhand messages). Related to information flow are direction and frequency. The direction of information flow can be horizontal (i.e., among members of one institution) or vertical (i.e., between members of different institutions). Frequency refers to the number of times that messages are sent and received (Van de Ven, 1976).

Theme 6: Communication—How are effective information flows created? Our findings indicate that the challenges encountered with communication (informational flow) included not only accuracy but also direction and frequency, as evidenced by the following input (from two faculty members):

I don't know what normal is, but I don't think it's a function of the [university] teams. I think it starts at the top with those meetings between [university administrators] and school districts, and somehow, there's not a clear line of communication that passes things on down.

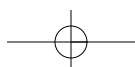
I think there's a perception out there that university people have all the time in the world.

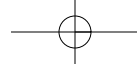
A mentor teacher's misinformation confirmed a perception held by some:

What we heard was these guys [university faculty] need something to do. . . . They don't have anything to do because their student teachers are out in the field. . . . I expected them to approach us, and maybe I shouldn't have.

One mentor teacher did share a positive comment regarding communication, however:

I just want to say, that when [faculty member] was here at our school, it was great! I felt like the student teachers were very supported. If you e-mailed her, she got back to you that very same day and that kind of thing went on all the time. The





communication that way went on really well.

Relational Dimensions

The relational dimensions describe how partners in the PDSs interact with each other—what their day-to-day roles are and how they build trust, form relationships, deal with conflicts, and view the results of the interaction. The objective—perhaps not communicated effectively—for the relationships in our university–school PDSs was to move from cooperative relationships to collaborative relationships. The final four themes from this study emerged in this category.

Theme 7: Interorganizational roles—Clearly defined or determined on the fly? With respect to perceptions of the university faculty's primary role in the PDS, the university faculty and mentor teachers responded in a variety of ways. The responses seemed to reflect what individuals thought the roles were or what they wished they were. Neither the faculty nor the mentor teachers appeared to be recalling roles and responsibilities that had been articulated and collaboratively defined when establishing a framework for the PDS. One mentor teacher, whose comments represent several responses from other mentors, said,

I thought the primary role was to come and to visit with the student teachers, see how things are going, see if there's any problems, observe them—maybe how the fit was.

University faculty from different PDS sites shared several additional roles that they saw themselves functioning in, some more positive than others:

I'm an ambassador for the university. I'm a mediator when we have difficult students or difficult mentor teachers. I see myself as being a communicator . . . and a cheerleader for the mentor teachers.

Mediator, groveler, you name it! We became very much the bearer of information, kind of a secretarial position.

Faculty from three PDS sites said, "I see our role as that of a guest in the district," "We wait to be invited in," and "We take our cue from the mentor teachers." While faculty were waiting to be invited in, mentors assumed that the professors were not interested in being in their classrooms and that they were not willing to fulfill their perceived roles.

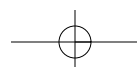
The data suggest that roles were being determined on the fly, sometimes by default, as tasks needed to be done. There seemed to be confusion, as well as some resentment from both groups, on what the roles were, what they should be, and what they could be if the partners clearly articulated them together. Yet one of the mentor teachers confirmed that these conversations regarding roles did occur: "We've met, and we've met, and we've met. They made huge old charts of the roles and who was going to do what. They planned. Who knows whatever happened to that."

Theme 8: Interorganizational relationships: Mutual trust and respect—or confusion, conflict, and unmet expectations? There is some overlap with this theme and the previous one, regarding primary roles. University faculty and mentor teachers shared that "relationship building" was a factor that needed persistent attention throughout the university–school interaction. A mentor teacher said, "Relationship building has got to be constant because if we know each other and understand what is expected throughout the whole year, that would really be helpful."

Some faculty shared perceptions of the mentors' resistance in creating a different way of interacting (or thinking of interacting) than what has traditionally been done:

The largest challenge was converting people to thinking about this relationship with the university and with the university faculty members and their relationship with their student teachers differently. . . . Most of the teachers I worked with were pretty comfortable or pretty happy with the way that they did things.

One PDS site had continuity such that the same university faculty members had been





working with them for 4 years. Mentor teachers in that site acknowledged a shared responsibility in the partnership, even when they thought that some of their expectations were not met:

Professional development was definitely lacking—although I'm not sure who should own that problem. Maybe we should own part of it simply because I never stepped up to the plate and said, "I need this and I want you to do it for me. How can we make it happen?" We never did that.

Conclusion

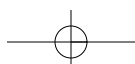
Interorganizational relationships will, realistically, have inherent tensions and challenges. The findings of this study have implications for not only elementary faculty and mentor teachers but other teacher educators, as well as colleagues in other areas of teacher preparation. The eight emergent themes generated from the three focus questions naturally fit into the four categories defined by the interorganizational relations framework discussed earlier (Alter & Hage, 1993; Rice, 2002; Van de Ven, 1976). Mentor teachers and university faculty shared their perceptions of the university faculty's role in the PDSs when responding to the study's first focus question: "What is your perception of the university faculty's role in the PDS?" Both groups indicated expectations of meaningful collaboration involving shared decision making and opportunities for choice within the relationships. However, without the roles being explicitly defined, individuals had their own varied expectations, which created a climate of confusion, mistrust, and unmet expectations. University faculty saw their newfound role in the field become multifaceted—they were ambassadors, mediators, cheerleaders, professional development facilitators, and so forth—whereas most mentor teachers were hoping for a more traditional model of help in evaluating the student teachers' performance (i.e., someone to cosupervise the student teachers).

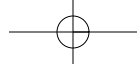
In response to the second focus question, "What have been the challenges working in

the PDS, if any?" the mentor teachers and the university faculty quickly mentioned the obvious issues when working in a rural setting—physical distance, weather-related travel problems, and transportation (when relying on university planes). Other challenges that emerged from the data, which may be present in other PDSs, include a lack of understanding of the PDS model, as well as limited preparation for the collaborative work. Participants also articulated as a persistent challenge the fragility of university–school relationships, citing histories of interactions as a foundation for, or an obstacle to, collaboration. In addition, university and public school participants identified administrative support and communication as key components in promoting better communication and compensating for some of the challenges.

The responses to the final focus question, "What have been the results of working in the PDS?" illuminated a similar disconnect between the perceptions of the university faculty and the mentor teachers. Most university faculty reported improved relationships with their public school colleagues, increased credibility by being present in the field, and more positive feelings about the impact that their fieldwork had on their instruction on campus, with a few questioning how strong these relationships really were. In contrast, most mentor teachers reported being disillusioned from what they had expected from PDS collaboration and then being awoken to what the reality was. In spite of these differences, the university faculty and mentor teachers overwhelmingly shared that the best part of working in a PDS was working with the outstanding student teachers. One must ask, if the mentor teachers perceive the student teachers as coming into the field better prepared and if the faculty are noting how their fieldwork is influencing and informing their practice, are there other major results that have gone unnoticed because of the tenuous situation that currently exists in these new PDSs?

Another question might be whether this is an effective PDS model for our large rural state. The data from the faculty and mentor teacher interviews highlighted several per-





ceptions related to the current effectiveness of our interorganizational model. Some areas appeared to have a disconnect between the two groups' perceptions of effectiveness; for example, most mentor teachers shared that collaboration with their university partners was lacking, whereas university faculty reported that interorganizational collaboration was a strength of the PDS work. Mentor teachers and faculty members were, however, united in their perceptions of areas that were ineffective—the lack of support from public school and university administrations, the flow of communication, the poorly defined roles. However, one area that both groups identified as an effective component of the PDS model is the increased quality of student teachers, particularly in the area of being well prepared for their residency experience. Both groups also mentioned the effective process used to place student teachers with mentor teachers. The answer to the question regarding whether this is an effective PDS model may appear to be *no*; however, a careful analysis of the data reveals that the collective voices of the stakeholders amplify a strong consensus on the areas needing improvement to function as an effective PDS. We see this consensus among stakeholders as a positive sign for moving forward and making improvements.

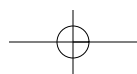
The findings of this study illuminate how critical it is to spend time preparing for this collaboration through realistic planning and by collaboratively (1) determining the roles and skills of the stakeholders that are essential for a productive, rewarding PDS experience; (2) identifying the complexities and challenges of participation in PDS sites; (3) acknowledging past histories, attitudes, and stereotypes that may require explicit efforts of the participants to acquire new perspectives and so move toward creating a positive PDS climate; (4) enlisting the support and involvement of district and university administrators in the implementation of the PDS partnerships and not underestimating their importance; (5) articulating the vision for the PDS collaboration—including the communication flow (what it will look like, what media will be

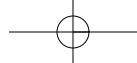
utilized, who will be responsible)—as well as ways to deal with adversity; and (6) clearly establishing the intended results of collaborative PDS work between university and schools.

The answer to this study's overarching question—Is authentic cross-cultural collaboration possible between universities and public schools within a PDS model?—is yes, but the perceptions from the field indicate that university and public school personnel will need to create new identities and be willing to work collaboratively in new ways to realize PDS goals. As they become hybrid educators, or boundary spanners, they will need to develop and rely on trust, the glue that binds individuals; they will need to ensure authentic choice (collaboration cannot be mandated); and they will need to share decision making in the new collaborative culture that they co-create.

We now share an update regarding our journey to create a collaborative partnership, intertwining the university and public school cultures. In our state, the university and four public school districts discussed in this study, along with a fifth district, have signed new 4-year MOUs. There is optimism and a commitment to continue working together to enhance student achievement, provide a quality new-teacher preparation experience, create professional development opportunities for university and district personnel, and embed mutually beneficial inquiry-based research. At this point, the cautious belief among university and school personnel is that it is possible for educators to creatively and patiently overcome the present obstacles and systematically and methodically become hybrid educators—boundary spanners capable of successfully working in the culture of the university as well as that of the public school.

Some of the changes following this study are described as follows. This study affected the state's school–university partnerships—past, present, and those under development. First, the researchers were invited to participate in a campuswide series of conversations about the role of boundary spanners in school–university partnership settings. Sharing the study results promoted discussion among campus colleagues



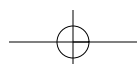


from the colleges of agriculture, education, and arts and sciences who are engaged in collaborative work in the field. This experience provided new insight, confirmation, and shared understandings of the challenges and rewards of working with our public partners. Second, as a result of this study, we created a Reader's Theater script, to share and represent the multiple perspectives that emerged from the data. Some of our public school partners collaboratively presented it as readers at different venues around the state, including the 20th-anniversary conference of the School–University Partnerships of the National Network for Educational Renewal, a development meeting of stakeholders creating a new PDS site in the state, and PDS mentor–student–teacher workshops. At one of these workshops, following the Reader's Theater performance, PDS stakeholders used the results to evaluate progress and establish PDS goals for the year. Third, to address some of the challenges involved with flying to distant sites, colleagues are experimenting with new ways of interacting. One approach involves faculty making fewer visits but increasing the duration of the scheduled visits. For example, one team flew in one time a month for a 1-day visit and then drove later in the month and stayed for a 3-day visit. This actually increases the time spent in classrooms and decreases the frequency of visits. Another approach utilizes technologies such as Skype and Illuminate to interact with student teachers from a distance.

In conclusion, this study created a vehicle to hear the various stakeholders' perspectives on our interorganizational relationships. By sharing the results of the study, we now operate more transparently as a PDS, work on developing trust and open communication between partners, and recognize the importance in that all stakeholders must reach across cultures and span the boundaries between the university and the public schools. We will face the continuing challenge to become hybrid educators—to understand the perspectives, expectations, and constraints of each of cultures while still appreciating the differences between them. ^{SUP}

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