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abreast of change in the 21st century (Editorial)**

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Professional experience in initial teacher education: Keeping abreast of change in the 21st century

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Integrated professional experience is a key characteristic of initial teacher education (ITE) programs worldwide. Its significance to the development of essential knowledge, skills and experience by pre-service teachers is widely acknowledged, notably by pre-service teachers themselves (see, e.g., Allen, Ambrosetti & Turner, 2013; Ell, Haigh, Cochran-Smith, Grudnoff, Ludlow & Hill, 2017). Program accreditation standards specify the professional experience measures that must be put into place by higher education providers (e.g., Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2018) and ITE evaluations typically zero in on how professional experience is enacted and assessed (e.g., Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, 2014). As in other professional tertiary degrees with embedded professional experience, such as nursing, health, and engineering, there is considerable complexity in constructing professional experiences that effectively serve the learning needs of all students while, at the same time, comply with regulatory requirements, are cost effective and sustainable, and add value to the work lives of those university and school staff involved.

In light of the latter, it is propitious that during the past two decades, in part as a corollary of the institution of teacher standards, professional experience engagement has become endorsed as a higher status, co-constructed activity between mentor and pre-service teacher. For example, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011) have incentivised teacher involvement in mentoring through requiring those at the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher levels to offer, where possible, quality placements for pre-service teachers. Where once, teachers were inclined to undertake mentoring out of a sense of good will or professional duty (Kruger, Davies, Eckersley, Newell & Cherednichenko, 2009), with minimal external motivation or benefit, they can now gain professional recognition for this work and potentially benefit through career advancement.

Mentoring has been shown internationally to be most effective when strong partnership arrangements between universities and schools are established (Allen, Howells & Radford, 2013; Allen, White & Sim, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Rachamim & Orland-Barak, 2018). There is nothing surprising in this, given the common understandings that need to be reached between higher education providers and schools about a range of matters, including the aims and purpose of a particular professional experience endeavour (according to its sequence in the ITE program), the learning and assessment outcomes involved, the functions of those involved in both sectors to best support those in pre-service, and communication requirements (see, e.g., <https://teacherevidence.net/>). At the policy level, many countries specify the inclusion of formal partnerships in standards for ITE program accreditation (e.g., AITSL, 2018; United Kingdom Department of Education, 2019).

What seems to be absent in the policy and scholarly literature to date is discussion about how partnerships might be reconceptualised and reformed in coming decades to align with online delivery modes of ITE. Particularly outside of urban areas, students who enrol in online courses are often located in places quite geographically distant and remote from the university campus. While some of the traditional partnership provisions can still apply in these circumstances, arrangements such as school visits by university personnel and relationship building via personal contact become significantly more challenging from the standpoint of feasibility, cost effectiveness, and sustainability. In many countries, such as Australia, where face-to-face engagement is commonly seen as the bedrock of strong university-school partnerships (e.g., Le Cornu, 2015), it is incumbent

upon those with a stake in ITE to consider how partnership-embedded professional experience might be (re)constructed to most effectively serve all students undertaking ITE studies in the third decade of the 21st century and beyond.

This current Issue begins with a paper by researchers Elisabeth Betlem, Deidre Clary and Marguerite Jones on the role played by mentors in a school-university partnership in an Australian rural setting. The authors conducted research that critically examined the trial and refinement of a contextualised professional development model that was designed to promote teacher capacity for mentoring. Entitled *Mentoring the Mentor*, this model used participatory action research (PAR) to guide teacher-mentors in critical reflective practice over a period of approximately thirty weeks. Benefits reported by participants included the opportunity to design their own site-based projects, share and test their ideas, solve problems together and gradually assume a larger role through the PAR process. Also contextualised in Australia, the research conducted by Kate Bone, Jane Bone, Sue Grieshaber and Gloria Quinones explored pre-service teachers' experiences of working with a same-level peer during their first professional experience placement. Situated in a sociological framework of organisational friendship and informed by a Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Approach, the research investigated how PAL could be used to foster collaborative, supportive learning to contribute to pre-service teachers' positive adjustment to university life. The study extends conceptions of organisational friendships beyond managerial imperatives and highlights peer relationships as supportive engagements.

The next two papers deal with the cognate area of mathematics in the preparation of ITE students for classroom teaching. Irish researchers Olivia Fitzmaurice, Niamh O'Meara, Patrick Johnson and Sean Lacey report on an exploratory study that was designed to determine and enhance the conceptual understanding of a group of pre-service teachers at one Irish university. Motivated by a concern held in many countries that ITE graduates often lack the conceptual understanding required to teach mathematics effectively, the researchers used Usiskin's (2012) framework for understanding mathematics to investigate the results of a ten-week intervention designed to enhance participants' subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Results from the study were mixed and point to the need for further work in this area. Based in the United States, Yeon Lee's study investigated how Lesson Study influences pre-service teachers' learning to professionally notice elementary students' mathematical thinking. Lesson Study is a professional development approach that has been shown to benefit both lesson planning and pedagogical performance. In this case study report, Lee confirms that Lesson Study can be a useful means to improve pre-service teachers' noticing expertise in reviewing and planning lessons in mathematics.

Following this, Jina Ro's paper draws on Gert Biesta's notion of good and value-based education to investigate four beginning secondary teachers' experience and perceptions of ITE in relation to their work in schools characterised by high-stakes testing regimes. Contextualised in Korea, Ro's work uncovered a significant dissonance between what the teachers believed they had been prepared to be, namely, content experts, and what was required of them. They found that the emphasis that had been placed on the qualification and socialisation functions of teacher education based on content expertise was of little value and meaning after they became teachers. By contrast, the pastoral care of students, for which they did not believe they had been as effectively prepared, was of much more significance to these beginning teachers.

Focusing on professional experience in Thailand, Daron Loo, Rhita Maidom and Nakhon Kitjaroonchai examined borderland discourse emergent from the experiences of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pre-service teachers teaching English in a Thai primary school. Data were collected through the reflective journals of three pre-service teachers who comprised the sample, and Søreide's framework was used to analyse the narratives. A major finding was the dissonance between pre-service teachers' expectations with the reality of their teaching context, for reasons

including the primary school students' inability to communicate in English and the use of a syllabus that was not commensurate with the students' language abilities. Also reporting on EFL pre-service teachers' experiences during professional experience, Emre Debreli explores the potential of shadowing as an observational and preparatory tool for learning. Debreli's qualitative study was located in Northern Cyprus, using semi-structured interviews and reflective reports to examine pre-service teachers' perceptions of teacher shadowing, including ways in which this technique contributed to their practical knowledge development. The outcomes for participants were mostly favourable, with many reporting positive perceptions and a considerable development in their practical knowledge through participation in the shadowing program.

All the papers in this Issue include implications for future research. Betlem and colleagues' report on the Mentoring the Mentor professional development program underscores the need to find powerful ways by which to inspire and retain mentors in the important work they do in ITE. Kate Bone's team brings to light positive findings about the PAL Approach as a means of actively engaging pre-service teachers as they adjust to university life, and point to the possibility of further uptake of this approach. The Irish research team led by Olivia Fitzmaurice signals the need for a re-assessment of the learning and teaching of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge of mathematics in many ITE programs. To this end, Lee suggests Lesson Study as an appropriate approach to improve pre-service teachers' expertise in mathematics. Jina Ro's paper is one of several in this Issue that highlights the challenges that can be faced by EFL pre-service teachers. Likewise, Daron Loo and colleagues identify a concerning dissonance between EFL pre-service teachers' expectations and their lived experience in the teaching context. In light of the increasing mobility of tertiary students worldwide and the prevalence of pre-service teachers undertaking professional experience in foreign countries, there is a clear need for more research into the experiences of, and outcomes for those involved. Emre Debreli's paper on shadowing as an effective technique for learning in ITE serves as a fitting contribution to this area.

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