

# Advancing Partnership Research: A Spatial Analysis of a Jointly-Planned Teacher Education Partnership

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## 1 Introduction

Australian governments, like those in the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK), are currently under pressure to improve the performance of their education systems, demanding changes in teacher education. As a result, the governments show a great deal of interest in ways of identifying, standardising and measuring the “quality” of teacher education (Plecki, Effers, & Nakamura, 2012). This has included raising entrance scores for teacher education programs, creating literacy and numeracy tests for graduates as a way of assuring their classroom readiness, identifying ways of bridging theory and practice and improving support for beginning teachers (Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG), 2014). In the USA the climate of accountability has led some universities, with the controversial assistance of commercial operator Pearson (Singer, 2013), to address the demand for “evidence” of quality by creating their own assessment process for graduate teachers (Stanford University, 2014). Varied government responses to the teacher “quality” debate in the UK reveal the contested nature of the teacher education issue. Universities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are in a range of situations in terms of power in teaching education (British Education Research Association (BERA), 2014), with the extremes being universities in England that have been marginalised in the teacher education process in favour of school-based teacher education (Beach & Bagley, 2013); whereas in Scotland policy-makers have supported links between universities and schools in initial teacher education (BERA, 2014). In Australia, too, policy-makers have intervened in university teacher education with the teacher education accreditation authority, the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), being charged

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with identifying ways to measure the quality of teacher education programs and/or their graduates (AITSL, 2015). At this time of heightened scrutiny and accountability, it is important that teacher educators take an active role in setting the teacher education agenda. This chapter reports an investigation of such an initiative.

Australian university teacher educators, while under accountability pressure, are better positioned in comparison to some of their European and American colleagues (Beach & Bagley, 2013; Zeichner, 2010) in that they have not lost their central place as providers of teacher education. Australia's government-mandated review of teacher education from TEMAG (2014) has been in broad agreement with university teacher educators (Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE), 2014) in stating that high quality teacher education is based on partnerships between universities and schools. As is an accepted view in much contemporary teacher education, the report argues that high quality teacher education is a shared enterprise between schools and universities, between the academic and the practical aspects of teachers' work (BERA, 2014; Kruger, Davies, Eckersley, Newell & Cherednichenko, 2009; TEMAG, 2014; Zeichner, 2012). In the English context, this is not the belief embodied in the move to make schools the primary sites for the education of teachers (Beach & Bagley, 2013; Department for Education (DfE), 2010). In the USA, views of the best approach to teacher education are highly divergent with programs such as *Teach for America* and other work-based pathways to teaching gaining ground (Zeichner, 2010). In contrast, the TEMAG report recommends school-integrated rather than school-based teacher education (TEMAG, 2014). Although the TEMAG report is clear in its support of school-university partnerships in teacher education, it argues that there is a lack of research on how these partnerships might improve what the report sees as the critical indicator of quality teacher education – school “student outcomes” (p. 41).

The link between teacher education programs and student outcomes is complex (Dinham, 2015). Candidates in teacher education programs are only in schools for relatively brief periods and assembling data on graduates of various programs is a long term proposition that governments might find unpalatable (Dinham, 2015). Yet, the evident complexity does not mean that it is not useful to focus on understanding the impact of schools and universities working together. The TEMAG report's support of partnerships suggests that a renewed approach to researching them is timely. In terms of an appropriate approach to investigating school-university partnerships, a recent meta-analysis of the field of international teacher education research (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015) identifies a significant absence of jointly planned school-university projects to explore the “connections between teacher and student learning” (p. 117). Such projects are important as they “provide alternative ways to think about teacher and student success” (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015, p. 117), thereby bridging the apparent theory-practice divide which has represented universities and schools as different or even oppositional spaces of professional learning.

Australia is currently generating a multiplicity of school-university partnership activities (ACDE, 2014) and, clearly, this work presents opportunities for research

about their value for teacher and student learning. It is critical knowledge for governments, not only in Australia but around the world, to understand the ways in which these often expensive university-school initiatives enhance both pre-service teacher (PST) and student outcomes. As a country with a small population and number of jurisdictions, Australia has the capacity to enact national educational reform (Dinham, 2013), and should use this capacity to create a strong research base for its current move to partnerships, thereby contributing to international knowledge about successful teacher education (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015).

This chapter addresses the identified gap of jointly planned school-university research through discussing the research outcomes of a project which was planned to meet both school and university interests. The Catholic Teacher Education Consortium (CTEC), an on-going university-school partnership, began in 2013 between 14 Catholic schools in the north and west of Melbourne, Catholic Education Melbourne (sector leadership) and Australian Catholic University (ACU). The project findings are valuable because they investigate the partnership outcomes and experience from the viewpoints of PSTs and teachers as well as from the vantage point of university and school leadership.

## 2 Research on School-University Partnerships

School-university partnerships in teacher education have been variously defined (Ryan & Jones, 2014). A relationship of some kind between schools and universities is essential to all but the most “learn on the job” kind of teacher education pathway because schools and universities must cooperate to organise and assess the PSTs’ practicum experiences. Commentators have categorised these partnerships in terms of the extent of engagement between partners (Kruger et al., 2009). In some partnerships such as the Professional Development School partnerships in the USA, universities and schools agree to work together on a range of mutually agreed activities (Darling-Hammond, 2005). In others there is a more limited relationship such that schools agree to host the PSTs’ practicum and there is little shared activity other than to achieve this goal (Kruger et al., 2009). In much of the research on these relationships between schools and universities there has been an interest in investigating how the theoretical knowledge of the university partner is translated into practice by the PST (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

This view of university and schools as having different concerns has led to studies interested in identifying factors which create and sustain closer relationships, such as the development of shared goals and on-going funding (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Kruger et al., 2009), as well as exploring the varieties of partnerships from cooperative to transformative (Kruger et al., 2009). There has been a body of partnership research that has viewed school-university activity as clinical practice in which the teachers and teacher educators induct PSTs into the professional practices of expert educators (McLean Davies et al., 2013), thereby emphasising the special-

ised knowledge of teaching. Another element of the literature has defined school-university partnerships as communities of practice into which PSTs are socialised, the most effective ones being those which create maximum interaction between university and school personnel (Le Cornu, 2012). Adding to the study of how the partnerships work and can be improved, those committed to teacher education in partnerships are interested in collecting evidence of their impact on the indicator of school performance outcomes. Effers, Plecki, and McGuigan (2014) have presented evidence that partnerships which require teacher candidates and lecturers to work more intensively in high-needs schools have contributed to improved school achievement.

A critique of international university-school partnership research has been that it has often been small scale, self-study investigations by teacher educators (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Nuttall, Murray, Seddon, & Mitchell, 2006). University teacher educators' concern with identifying the strengths and weaknesses of their work has meant a proliferation of analyses of partnerships in terms of their own experience and that of PSTs with whom they work. Such perception data, while useful, have often not included that of school leaders, teachers and students (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). As well as the tendency to be self-study, it has been argued that partnership research has failed to show why a school-integrated teacher education approach might be better than a traditional separated academic and practical approach to teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). In some instances, the opposite appeared to be the case because teacher education candidates in programs that required them to manage university and school activities at the same time were more stressed than those whose preparation did not involve managing these transitions (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Allen, 2010).

As well as the "small-scale" claim, another critique of teacher education research, including partnership research, has been that the assumptions and theoretical frameworks have been so diverse that it is difficult to connect findings from various studies (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Nuttall et al., 2006; Sleeter, 2014). The research discussed in this chapter seeks to address this claim by adopting a framework that connects it with other studies of teacher education (Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015), in particular the most recent large-scale Australian study of the effectiveness of teacher education (Rowan, Mayer, Kline, Kostogriz, & Walker-Gibbs, 2015).

### **3 Framework for the Current Study**

This present study takes the position that the current teacher education context with its concern to make teacher education accountable for school outcomes is based on a binary view of teacher education partnerships. That is, the context of accountability reproduces, in most cases unintentionally, a spatial politics of teacher education

that does not transcend the boundaries established by traditional models of partnerships in which school-based professional learning is simply integrated into university-based teacher education courses. Such a partnership model does not challenge the lines of jurisdictional maps and the relations of power associated with them, and hence, sustains the divide between theory and practice, the imagined and the real, preparedness for work and the teachers' work proper. As a result, PSTs find it difficult to bridge the gap between the theoretical knowledge coming from the university and the practical knowledge developed in schools.

More helpful in describing the development of knowledge about teaching is the view of teacher education as taking place in the *boundary zone* where teacher educators, teachers and PSTs can jointly construct professional knowledge. This view of partnerships presupposes dialogical relationships on the boundary between universities and schools. Teacher education partnerships are best seen as activities in which hybridization of theory and practice can occur. In this view of partnerships hierarchies of knowledge are diminished (Zeichner et al., 2015) through dialogical interaction of the theoretical and the practical, the abstract and the particular. This boundary zone has the potential to be the place of production of new professional knowledge for all involved. Teacher education is not a process of making theory into practice but best understood as zones of mixing, blending and hybridization – as a *thirdspace* where both theoretical and practical dimensions of teacher work and power relations between stakeholders come together (Bhabha, 1994; Kostogriz, 2005, 2006; Soja, 1996).

The concept of thirdspace draws our attention to the dialectical and dynamic nature of professional learning through university-school partnerships, if these are open to dialogue and continuous negotiation of meanings and professional identities. As Rowan et al. (2015) argue, it is not useful to see teacher education in a simple or singular way. Drawing on the work of Soja (1996), they suggest that teacher education needs to be seen in terms of the *conceived space* of its visions and goals; the *perceived space* of the teacher education programs that enact the vision; and the *lived space* of day-to-day teaching and learning. Their analysis of teacher education attempts to keep these distinctions in mind in making judgements about what is “effective” in teacher education. Spaces of partnerships in this understanding are outcomes of the interplay of the lived practices of teacher educators, teachers and PSTs in their places (institutions), and representations about how relations between them and their workplaces are made and how they should be made (e.g., ideals negotiated through and imbedded in partnership arrangements). The analysis of the teacher education partnership, CTEC, presented here focuses on the lived space in which the various participants endeavoured to do the day to day work of enacting the project vision. The main objective of the research is to explore the everyday experience of teachers, PSTs, teacher educators and other collaborators as they collectively negotiate the spatial production of meanings related to partnership development.

## 4 Methodology

The CTEC research project is a 4 year longitudinal case study of a partnership between ACU, Catholic Education Melbourne and initially 14 schools, with an additional school joining in 2014 and another in 2015. The partnership has the aims to:

1. increase the number and quality of graduates coming to teach in CTEC schools;
2. increase numbers of students from CTEC schools undertaking teaching at ACU; and
3. enhance understanding of effective PST education delivered through university-system-school partnerships in urban growth and low SES areas.

Information about increased recruitment of graduates from ACU at CTEC schools is not yet available as the initial cohort of PSTs will not graduate until 2016, monitoring of ACU entrants from CTEC schools is being tracked and compared with the period prior to CTEC to see whether there has been growth in enrolments. The third aim of understanding teacher education delivered through partnerships is a focus in this chapter and will be addressed through investigation of the lived experience of participants as they work in partnership. In pursuing this objective, data sources from the first 2 years of activity in the planned 4 year study will be examined.

Case study is an appropriate methodology to investigate the spaces of a teacher education partnership because a variety of data sources can be included in order to create the case (Harland, 2014). Also analysis of a particular case can be used to consider the value of contemporary theories in the field. In this study, thematic analysis of project documents, such as formal agreements between the parties, shows the vision and goals of participants (conceived space), and evidence about how the participants carried out their vision through planned programs and ongoing initiatives are presented (perceived space). Most substantially, attention is given to the lived experience of participants collected through surveys and individual and small group interviews. Examination of these data sources enables the analysis of a case of teacher education on the boundary with a view to assessing the value of the idea that partnerships can be a creative space of dialogical relationships and shared responsibility between universities and schools; as well as the site of disruptions that put the collaboration at risk. The research was planned to investigate both participant perceptions of the project as well as findings about recruitment and eventual employment of CTEC PSTs at CTEC schools.

To address the issue of possible bias in researching a program in which researchers were also designers and teachers, data were collected by research/administration staff who were not working directly with the PSTs. At the start of the program in 2013 researchers collected initial data about the perceptions of the recently-recruited PSTs. Later, in 2013 and in the following year, the following were collected:

- Questionnaires with the 2013 and 2014 cohorts of PST participants;
- Individual and small group interviews conducted with the 2013 and 2014 cohorts of PSTs;

- Small group and individual interviews conducted with school staff, including principals, careers advisors and student teacher co-ordinators, in 2013 and 2014;
- Small group and individual interviews conducted with relevant academics from Australian Catholic University in 2013 and 2014;
- Small group and individual interviews conducted with Catholic Education Melbourne staff in 2013 and 2014.

In the following analysis, project documents have been used to explore findings about the CTEC partnerships as have perception data gathered from all groups of participants. The comments made in interviews and questionnaires have been analysed for recurring themes related to their experience of the partnership. Informed by the work of Miles and Huberman (1994) an inductive approach to coding the responses was used with Nvivo 10 software.

## 5 Analysis and Discussion

### 5.1 *The Conceived Space: The Catholic Vision of the Partnership*

The CTEC – Northern and Western Pilot Project – was the vision of ACU’s Victorian Chapter which is a consultative body, led by ACU Executive members and includes University stakeholders, such as the representatives of Catholic Education Melbourne and Catholic school principals. Details of the partnership’s origin are significant in that it was a joint venture representing the goals of both the University, sector leadership and some school principals. The Chapter group identified a need for adequate staffing with a commitment to the Catholic ethos to work in Catholic secondary schools in the northern and western suburbs of Melbourne to keep pace with the growing enrolments in these areas. Between 2007 and 2013 there was a 12.2% growth in enrolments overall in the northern and western suburbs. Growth in the outer north and outer west had been strongest, with an 18.9% increase between 2007 and 2013 (Catholic Education Melbourne, 2014). Given these numbers and the continuing housing developments on the suburban fringes it was believed that staffing for Catholic schools was an issue in need of a dedicated approach. The partnership, which began with 14 and grew to 16 Catholic secondary schools from the focus areas, planned to address this need by developing a specialised program within the Bachelor of Teaching/Bachelor of Arts (BT/BA) course, a 4 year undergraduate secondary teacher education program. The specialised program was aimed at developing PSTs who were particularly prepared for and interested in working in the Catholic schools in the area.

The partnership vision pursued by the project was to create maximum engagement of PSTs in the CTEC school communities through a dedicated tutorial for them within course units, holding classes in CTEC schools where possible; completion of PST Community and Professional Experience within CTEC schools and other opportunities to immerse themselves in schools with a view to becoming a

teacher in the area. These elements were adaptations of elements of similar projects already established between ACU, Catholic Education Melbourne and Catholic primary schools which had shown promising results for partnerships in teacher education (Butler, Larkins, & Cahir, 2013; Summers & Weir, 2012). The project also had the goal of promoting enrolment in teacher education programs of students from CTEC schools to ensure the long term sustainability of staffing for Catholic schools in the north and west of Melbourne. A broader goal of improving access to university of students from the area was also part of the initial vision. The project concept incorporated both the staffing goals of schools and the University's central strategic goal to support the "historic Mission of Catholic educational institutions" (ACU Strategic Plan 2012–2014, p. 4). For the Faculty of Education and Arts, CTEC offered the opportunity to "contribute to the evidence base for effective PST education delivered through university-system-school partnerships in urban growth and low SES areas" (Ryan, Dawson, Nailer, & Podporin, 2015, p. 16). It is clear that, in terms of the vision of CTEC at least, the partnership was a space for collaboration between the diverse groups to create a shared future.

## ***5.2 The Perceived Space: CTEC's Implementation***

Planning conversations began in 2011 with a Memorandum of Understanding negotiated by the partners in 2012. A Steering Committee representing all CTEC partners continued to meet regularly to oversee and review implementation of project elements. The first cohort of PSTs entered what was called a "Pilot" program in 2013; the pilot phase being the 2 years for which the program was initially funded, allowing two cohorts of PSTs to enter. The initial commitment of all parties was to complete the pilot with the expectation that if it proved successful further cohorts would enter the project. Based on initial positive findings (Butler, Dawson, Love, Nailer, & Podporin, 2014) the project did take in further cohorts in 2014 and 2015 who will graduate after the end of the pilot phase. Activities were facilitated with in-kind resources from Catholic Education Melbourne and from the schools, 2 years of funding from the University Executive as well as Equity Pathways funding, the latter being a University equity and access program. However, as documented by researchers on partnership sustainability, insecurity of funding is a constant in most teacher education partnerships (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Kruger et al., 2009). Therefore, perhaps predictably, as noted in the 2014 and 2015 CTEC reports (Butler et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2015), the level of funding was reduced after the program's initial years, putting its continuation at risk. But, despite this threat, further internal support was eventually found for the CTEC work in schools to continue. Unlike government funded school-university partnerships, whose duration can be dependent on the external political context (Jones & Ryan, 2014), it seemed that a



program which was close to the strategic direction of the Faculty and University was one which continued to find University support.

An investigation of the activities of the project Steering Committee and its leadership team in the years 2013–2015 suggests the project team undertook a range of activities that were designed to maintain the profile of the partnership with its supporters. Bi-annual reports were made to ACU Chapter; a project newsletter was regularly published which gave details of CTEC achievements; an annual CTEC dinner was held where the University Executive celebrated the CTEC experience with Catholic Education Melbourne representatives, principals and PSTs; CTEC school staff were integrated into University classes creating strong links between the academic and practical aspects of the program. Such activities were opportunities to share experiences and research findings and argue for the continuation of the program.

The 2015 report noted that connections between Catholic institutions were strengthened during the implementation phase through mechanisms such as ongoing email and newsletter communication and regular meetings with Catholic Education Melbourne consultants and principal representatives from the northern and western regions. It also recommended that “the Pilot Project be continued as planned, with research findings informing its further development and implementation” (Ryan et al., 2015, p. 27). The project’s concern with enhancing educational outcomes in the north and west of Melbourne, where socioeconomic factors contribute to limiting access to higher education, meant that the University’s access program Equity Pathways continued to provide funding for CTEC activities (Ryan et al., 2015). The sector partners, Catholic Education Melbourne, and the school principals helped to maintain the shared vision through their attendance at meetings and participation in CTEC’s regular evaluation activities. Despite the on-going threat of loss of funding the partnership continued into its third and fourth year.

### ***5.3 The Lived Experience of CTEC***

#### **5.3.1 The Catholic Ethos**

Thirdspace theory (Bhabha, 1994) suggests that to create successful teacher education in the boundary between university and schools there needs to be a space for discussion and negotiation among the parties to create a shared and/or new understanding of the enterprise. As has been noted, the CTEC project enjoyed high level support from the University as well as from sector leadership and principal representatives during its development and implementation phases. An important issue in terms of the success of the program is whether the vision was shared among those

who were engaged in the implementation of the program at the school and university level. There is evidence in data collected from interviews with principals and ACU staff that suggests that the shared sense of “Catholic” identity and community was significant in their commitment to the project. One principal identified the role of CTEC in enhancing the opportunity “to nurture the Catholic ethos of the schools” (Principal, 2014). Another principal talked about the importance of supporting PSTs at ACU as part of a broader commitment to Catholic education: “This is about investing in our Catholicity and our education system” (Principal, 2013).

The interview data also showed that the vision of a Catholic education was shared by those who were involved in the day-to-day operation of CTEC but not as part of the project leadership. A PST Coordinator, charged with organising CTEC school experience, noted that the engagement of the PSTs in the school community meant that teachers could show them “what it means to be a Catholic person, a person working in a Catholic school” (Teacher, 2014). One of the ways in which the CTEC program sought to engage in the northern and western school communities was by situating the mandated BT/BA Community Engagement experience within the social justice programs of the CTEC school communities. PSTs undertook a variety of activities in the communities such as helping in soup kitchens, homework clubs and camps. The PST Coordinator commented, “From a Catholic perspective there’s the links to the other organisations outside the school to, you know, the [Catholic social justice project]” (Teacher, 2014). Another teacher in a different school said that, even if the PSTs didn’t return to teach at their school, “at least they know the feeling of supported community in a Catholic education setting, and may foster that somewhere else” (Deputy principal, 2014). Some of the CTEC PSTs had themselves attended a Catholic school, sometimes a CTEC school, and a careers advisor interviewed saw the value of the project in promoting access to education for students in the area stating that “something like this may encourage those students to feel like university is a genuine aspiration... And for those interested in going into teaching ... they’ve shown an interest in wanting to revisit the schools that they’ve been part of” (Teacher, 2013). The PSTs also commented on the significance of the Catholic ethos in both choosing to be part of CTEC in the first place and then as an aspect of the program that they appreciated. Findings from the questionnaire indicate that the proportion of students wanting to work in Catholic secondary schools upon graduation remained fairly consistent across the two rounds of data collection, with the strong majority (83%) continuing to indicate a desire to teach in Catholic secondary schools. Two PSTs who had not attended Catholic schools explained their initial perceptions and the impact of participating in the program on their attitudes.

I went to a government school and had nothing to do with religion. So that ... would have put up a lot of barriers for me applying for a school that had religion involved with it. Now I’m not as afraid of that ... it’s not a barrier to me. (PST, 2014)

I was really sceptical about Catholic schools. I’d never been to one and I was just like, oh, church school, but seeing how much they really care about their students and how much they really try to engage the families into the school, I really like it. So I was like, oh, Catholic schools are great. (PST, 2014)

### 5.3.2 The Value of Being Part of a Cohort

Although PSTs in CTEC highlighted the value of being involved in a Catholic school as a positive of the project for them, at the end of the first year and again in the following year the more significant element for them was their enrolment in a CTEC-only tutorial and therefore being part of a cohort of learners. One PST gave the following response:

I really enjoyed being part of [CTEC project team member's] tutorial group. I think she ... really went out of her way for us as well ... And it was nice, yeah, knowing that you're part of a group and you know who's going to be in your class and ... well we had [CTEC project team member] for ... three semesters in a row, so that was pretty good. Like that consistency. (PST, 2014)

The benefits of being with the cohort were seen as both academic and social as in the following comment, "I notice ... with the presentations that we've had so far, you know, we're all laughing and being comfortable 'cause [sic] we know each other" (PST, 2014). There was evidence that the creation of a cohort experience also helped to make the theory-practice connection so sought after in teacher education:

The way our tutorial was staged directly after placement, I thought was great because ... it meant that we were able to go straight from being there to talking about it and to rehash what we'd learnt and observed throughout the day. (PST, 2013)

Another participant from the 2014 cohort echoed this idea when asked about her motivation for getting involved in CTEC. "I really like the idea of having like the same cohort of students, like staying with the same class all the way through" (PST, 2104). This group also saw future professional relationships being developed. One PST commented, "And potentially we'll be getting, hopefully, jobs in the same areas anyway so you've got that like connection with all your other peers and staff as well" (PST, 2014).

### 5.3.3 Long-Term Relationships

While the idea of creating professional relationships was not highlighted in the broad aims of CTEC, as with the primary school projects from which CTEC had been adapted (Butler et al., 2013; Summers & Weir, 2012), the idea that teacher education partnerships created opportunities for close professional relationships was important in a key CTEC approach of intensive PST engagement in schools. This vision was appreciated by those who were involved in the project at the school level, they tended to emphasise the long-term nature of the relationships that were facilitated. A teacher said "the ongoing nature of it I think is fantastic" (Teacher interview, 2014). A Deputy Principal made the comment, "I'm a fan of anything that's long-term" (Principal interview, 2014). A principal noted, "I think having students assigned to us on a long-term basis is good ... you know, they're not just here 3 weeks and you never see them again ... they become quite connected with

the school” (Principal interview, 2013). One principal even saw its impact into the distant future.

My sense to it would be that if we persevere with it, and this is not something over a year or two, we’ve got to be committed to this over a five to 10-year ... then you can get your measure of it ... do they take up leadership roles in our schools? (Principal, 2014).

### 5.3.4 Disruptions to Relationships

While participants’ satisfaction with being involved in a program which developed relationships over time was one element of the project discourse expressed by participants in a range of roles, the concept was interrupted somewhat by experiences of communication breakdowns and organisational frustrations. Such challenges were raised by ACU, Catholic Education Melbourne, school staff and PSTs. Ensuring that information about CTEC reached the different relevant staff at schools was difficult, as was ensuring clear communication between and within ACU and Catholic Education Melbourne. As noted in other partnership research (Darling-Hammond, 2005), face-to-face meetings were very helpful in clarifying project goals and roles but were difficult to schedule, given the different work patterns of schools and universities, as well as the busy workloads of university and school-based staff. The biggest challenge with communication occurred in relation to the Community Engagement experience. As this was something different from a standard teaching placement, both the PSTs and the schools were somewhat unsure of exactly what it entailed. The comments below indicate how a teacher education partnership vision may be created by leadership but it has to be enacted by teachers and PSTs in their day to day work in schools. A PST co-ordinator charged with organising placements at a school said:

I think there’s still a lot of work to be done. I’m not sure whether it’s just me, because all the information goes to the principal and then is fed into me. I’m not sure whether I’ve just been kept out of the loop, but I don’t feel like I’ve had much information from any of the involved partners. But, as I said, maybe that’s just because I haven’t been given the information from the principal. (Teacher, 2014)

PSTs found themselves in the middle of this absence of communication. One said it would have been good in schools to:

have someone call us or reply or, you know, we’ve spoken to one person that wasn’t the right person, and then we got pushed to someone else who hadn’t spoken to that person and had no idea what we were about. (PST interview, 2014)

Complaints about communication breakdown seem endemic to partnerships between schools and universities (Allen, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2005). In the case of CTEC, the frustrations have not led to significant numbers of PSTs leaving the program. The 2013 cohort of 18 PSTs lost two due to them choosing to exit or defer the BT/BA course and one because of relocation away from the CTEC area. The 2014 cohort of 23 PSTs lost five because of exiting or deferring the course but gained three new participants (Ryan et al., 2015). Teachers involved in the program had choices whether or not to agree to supervise a CTEC PST but did not have significant power over the project apart from this.

### 5.3.5 Experience Beyond Catholic Schools

A concern, which goes closer to providing a challenge to the Catholic vision of the project, noted by some PSTs as well as staff from Catholic Education Melbourne and schools, was that PST experience might be limited through only being placed in Catholic schools. One PST said “I would like to see a state school, ‘cause [sic] I went in primary and secondary both Catholic. I’d love to see and be involved in a state setting once” (PST, 2014).

This comment reveals a certain tension for some participants in the lived experience of the Catholic vision of the project. In response, the Steering Committee expressed the view that as long as PSTs had the opportunity to be placed at/visit a range of different Catholic schools (7–12, Senior, Single-sex, Co-Educational) within the Consortium this limitation would be addressed (Ryan et al., 2015). As noted, the vast majority of the initially recruited PSTs have remained with the program despite the concern of some that their experience might be limited by only experiencing Catholic schools. Some CTEC participants have been further engaged in CTEC schools by gaining casual paid employment in one of the schools, for example as integration support officers. This was an element of the original project design, planned to enable further immersion of PSTs in school communities when the cohort was in the third year of their BT/BA.

### 5.3.6 Workload Issues

For the CTEC team at the University and Catholic Education Melbourne there have been on-going comments about the viability of CTEC in terms of the workload it required, an experience which has been shown to be frequently connected to partnership work because of its position outside the teacher education norm, usually dependent on insecure grant funding (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Kruger et al., 2009).

The CTEC reports also document many staff changes which show the program’s vulnerability to changes in personnel, likewise identified as a high risk element in teacher education partnerships’ success (Kruger et al., 2009). However, as noted earlier, the fact that CTEC has continued to enjoy some financial support because of its coherence with the University’s mission has meant that participants’ workload issues have not threatened the survival of the project to date.

### 5.3.7 Policy Disruptions

In 2015 an intrusion from the perceived space of Australian national and University policy had the potential to challenge CTEC more than any of the previously encountered disruption. After submitting to its mandatory periodic review the BT/BA course lost its embedded Community Engagement unit in favour of PSTs having more discipline study and more supervised teaching days in schools, this being in line with AITSL accreditation policy (AITSL, 2014). Community Engagement undertaken in CTEC school communities had been consistently identified by

participants as a strength of CTEC, allowing PSTs to know about their school community before undergoing formal teaching experience at the schools:

I think a benefit [or] highlight is to actually meet the students, not just for teaching purposes. So we have PSTs from other universities but they ... their involvement is just purely classroom oriented. So the two students that we've had from ACU over the year have been able to get to know us as a community ... get to know the students, so then when they go into the classrooms there's even a connection there because they've met the students in a community forum first" (PST Coordinator 2014).

The impact of this change has not been felt by CTEC participants as the revised course is only in its early stages, but that it has occurred demonstrates that the quality of teacher education is affected by factors in the conceived and perceived spaces as much as by what participants experience in the lived space.

Another intrusion on the CTEC experience from the policy space occurred at the beginning of 2015 when some of the original CTEC schools were offered state government funding for a different partnership activity and one school declined some of CTEC's PSTs for placement out of a concern that they would not be able to support both partnership programs. Within the thirdspace framework such disruptions are part of the challenge of working in the hybrid space between the University and schools

## 6 Conclusion

Examination of CTEC in terms of its conceived, perceived and lived spaces illustrates that engagement in a university-school partnership involved participants in complex activities to establish arrangements which met a vision created at a leadership level. Perceptions of the program revealed that the Catholic ethos underlying the partnership was shared by many of the participants in schools – PSTs and teachers. The partnership investigation suggested that the shared vision gave some strength to the partnership in that participants were able to see where they were going with the work even when it was demanding. While the school participants were more likely to describe the significance of the partnership in terms of valued professional relationships in a shared Catholic context rather than as a vision for the Catholic education system overall, they did not express doubts about this vision. They supported the idea of the partnership despite experiencing communication and other challenges in the boundary zones in which they worked. Participants at the leadership level of university and school were also required to manage changes in policy and resources which threatened the partnership. Ongoing investigation of the program into its third and fourth year will reveal whether it is able to remain resilient.

In terms of what the CTEC project contributes to research on partnerships in teacher education, the research suggests that joint planning and execution of a teacher education initiative prevents universities from becoming narrowly focused on preoccupations like finding placements for PSTs. Instead it means that there is a

joint articulation by both the schools and the university participants of what the desirable future teachers might be like. This discussion in the boundary zone is very important for managing the on-going work of constructing the specifics of the program and carrying it out.

The CTEC model presents an alternative notion of partnerships that presupposes dialogical relationships on the boundary between the University and schools. Boundary is presented as an open zone of collaboration and production of professional knowledge and as a space of rich experiences for all involved. In the case of CTEC the partnership has disrupted the status quo of the members and invited participants to join resources, knowledge and experience in and for collaborative teacher education practice. Whether or not the participants accept this invitation becomes a matter of their responsibility evident in an ability to respond to others and their needs, standpoints and understandings. This project therefore redefines partnerships in teacher education as an ethical practice that is open to and includes all the parties involved. By locating teacher education in thirdspace – on the boundary between universities and schools – responsibility of partnership members is less about their own interests, power and control than about exposure to the event of PSTs' professional becoming. This responsibility does not come from either teacher educators or teachers but rather from this event that calls to them and that has been articulated in the original idea of the CTEC project – that is, to increase the number of quality teachers in Catholic schools that are located in socially disadvantaged suburbs. It will be important for the project team to investigate the ways in which the dialogical partnership model continues to be useful in describing the work of participants in the next years of the project. Given the need for teacher education research studies to connect with each other, the project is also an invitation to other researchers to investigate teacher education partnerships based in other contexts in terms of the idea of relationships in the boundary zone.

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