Partnership through placement: Scottish HEI-tutors views on collaboration with schools through the Initial Teacher Education placement experience

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Abstract

Placement, the part of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) involving Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs) working in school, is a marked feature of ITE programmes that involve Higher Education Institution (HEI) input. In Scotland, placement is a feature of ITE, forms a major plank of the assessment of teaching quality and occurs in partnership arrangements between HEIs, schools and other organisations. As part of the *Measuring Quality in Initial Teacher Education* (MQuITE) research project, HEI-staff in the nine Scottish institutions offering ITE were surveyed for their views on a range of ITE matters. This paper discusses 150 respondents' answers regarding placement within current partnership arrangements. Using positioning theory (cf. Harré, 2004) as the frame for thematic analysis, data highlighted concerns, but significant desire for continuing development of partnership as a mechanism to develop PSTs. The paper has international implications for systems that utilise placement within a standards-based approach to ITE partnership.

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Keywords: Initial Teacher Education; Placement; Partnership; teacher educator roles

Though processes might differ globally, placement represents a universally recognisable feature of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) requiring substantial collaboration and partnership. Observation of Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs) within schools can be thought of as a threshold assessment of teacher competency, but also the site where teacher educators enact partnership and develop relationships between schools and universities or other training providers (Ellis et al., 2011). In the Scottish context, such partnership involves Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) managing collaboration with local authorities (LAs) and schools to educate PSTs through regular periods of site-based and university-based learning through to an induction year led predominantly by schools and LAs. During ITE, partnership centres on formative and summative assessments of PSTs through shared teaching observations on placement and student compilation of a Professional Practice File to demonstrate how professional standards are met. Partnership therefore necessitates shifts in emphasis, with different stakeholder views and functions ascendant at different stages of the PST journey.

This paper uses data from a September 2018 survey of 150 university-based teacher educators undertaken as part of the *Measuring Quality in Initial Teacher Education* (MQuITE) Project (Rauschenberger, Adams, and Kennedy, 2017). Some numerical data are given here as context, but the focus is on qualitative analysis of free-text responses using Positioning Theory (Harré, 2004) as a theoretical framework.

The paper first discusses partnership working through placement to demonstrate day-today work collaboration. Following an explanation of methods and analysis, findings are presented on how partnership, and barriers thereto, were articulated. Positioning Theory is deployed to interpret how such findings can be understood through power relations as manifest through the rights, duties, and obligations which govern action and speech. Finally, it is argued that such partnership positions may help to engage in the commonly stated desire among participants for greater partnership and, particularly help to problematise the notion of what it means for partnership roles to be 'clear'.

Collaborative partnership and the Scottish situation

Partnership working is more-or-less ubiquitous as a defining feature of ITE reform (Allen, Ambrosetti, and Turner, 2013). For Maandag, Deinum, Hofman, and Buitink (2007), partnership centres on relationships ranging from workplace models (students simply engaged in fixed term placements), through to training schools where students are located for most if not all of their time in one school with limited HEI participation. In Scotland, ITE is organised by HEIs in partnership with schools, LAs and the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS); the latter operate the Student Placement System (SPS) which places students for their placement experiences. While partnership arrangements have existed for decades, contemporary mechanisms stem from the Donaldson Report (Donaldson 2010, 11) which desired to set 'practical experience in a much more reflective and inquiring culture'. Donaldson noted that partnership should be *collaborative* with shared responsibility between all actors.

The structure of placement across programmes varies but length, distribution, and assessment of PST learning is much more uniform and built around requirements of 30

weeks across four years of undergraduate ITE in which 'More than half of this experience should occur in the final 2 years of the programme, with a substantial block taking place in the last year' (General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), 2013). Likewise, one-year Professional Graduate Diplomas in Education (PGDE) must last at least 36 weeks and should be at least 50% placement-based. GTCS guidelines state that placement arrangements 'take full account of the partners' mutual aims and their respective priorities and responsibilities' (General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), 2013). These guidelines, along with the Donaldson Report, set a collaborative benchmark for Scottish partnership. Partnership therefore involves managing myriad arrangements including LA mediation. Additionally, schools often work with several HEIs to facilitate PSTs in undertaking much-needed rural or remote placement even when their HEI is urban-based. Collaborating to facilitate rural placements is a good example of meeting partner needs, while delivering policy aims to improve recruitment and retention in rural areas.

Such collaboration is more than administrative; it embodyies the need for partnership to work across 'boundaries' and requires organisational change including redefining relationships and cultures (Akkerman and Bruining, 2016). Seeing boundaries as 'sociocultural differences between practices leading to discontinuities in action or interaction' (Akkerman and Bruining, 2016) accepts that the 'work' of schools differs from the 'work' of others in the ITE partnership, but concurrently, that partnership must be part of these everyday practices. As such, 'boundary crossing' signals collaboration which draws on dialectical approaches to interfaces between theory and practice that legitimise and construct different forms of knowing (Smith, Brisard, and Menter, 2006). Such collaborative partnership views seek to overcome perceived limitations of HEI-led and complementary approaches (Cohen, Hoz, and Kaplan, 2013). Collaborative partnership specifically aims to avoid dichotomies between theory and practice and the risk of seeing teacher knowledge as sequential (first university, then school) or locating responsibility for bringing together the separate worlds of the HEI and school onto PSTs (Furlong et al., 2006).

As Bartholomew and Sandholtz (2009, 156) note, the underlying success of collaborative models is that they 'offer a means of ending the fragmented approach to teacher education, professional development, and school improvement'. Collaboration seemingly bridges

theory-practice divides and strengthens HEI-school relationships (Allen, 2011). Further, LilleJord and Børte (2016) note a 'third space' where school practice culture meets HEI academic culture in joint deliberation, requiring the explanation of activities normally taken for granted in their original setting as 'participants become aware of the historical and cultural context of their activities, and when norms are challenged, innovative thinking evolves' (LilleJord and Børte, 2016). Across Scottish ITE partnerships, while collaborative models are built on joint planning, joint delivery is limited even though all partners are encouraged to consider the epistemological and pedagogical implications of PST learning (Furlong et al., 2006).

Unsurprisingly, internationally, dilemmas are noted: partnership is not always successful, often due to time constraints and the cultural and traditional differences between partners (Allen, Ambrosetti, and Turner, 2013). Indeed, it is not universally accepted that partnerships with HEIs are altogether necessary for PST development. For example, English policy criticised HEI-led ITE for being too theoretical (Department for Education, 2010). Further, and more generally, university can often appear set against school (conceptual Vs practical). However, if both locations are important for ITE, then separation is problematic (Allen, Ambrosetti, and Turner, 2013). While mechanisms should exist to support the development of all, power imbalances often mitigate against effective working and privilege one group over another:

> most partnerships between teacher education institutions and schools are based on traditional, hierarchical relationships between partners, vertical lines of 'collaboration' and stable ideas of knowledge transfer. In such one-way relations, one partner is normally expected to 'add value', and in teacher education partnerships, this has typically been the university (LilleJord and Børte, 2016, 551).

Notably, new teachers often state that placement was the most important part of their ITE (Grudnoff, 2011) and seems to influence facets of teacher life, including job satisfaction and length of service, albeit not always positively (Grudnoff, 2011). Placement is also argued as crucial in iterative reflective cycles as part of slowly learnt tacit knowledge and competencies specifically through enabling PSTs to ameliorate unformed and sometimes conflicting classroom knowledge (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009). Collaborative partnership relies upon

different partners across sites to support PSTs to manage professionalisation synthesis. Successful programmes integrate placement experiences to facilitate PSTs' personal narrative construction that merge theory and practice into a coherent whole (Pridham, Deed, and Cox, 2013). For individual PSTs, this is intended to lead to 'wisdom of practice', while partners likewise co-re-construct shared understanding of what is required to support PSTs such that their development is not seen as the sole responsibility of any one partner (Ong'ondo and Jwan, 2009).

More recently, internationally, collaborative approaches to ITE through placement are affected by debate around teacher knowledge and the purpose of teacher education. The assumption that complex tacit knowledge requires gradual and iterative experiences formed through partnership is particularly challenged in approaches which stress 'training' (rather than 'education') and where the here-and-now of teacher skills is seen as a much less problematic form of knowledge (Ulvik and Smith, 2014). In contrast to collaborative partnership, such a view individualises the PST experience through narratives such as 'survival' or 'resilience'. Tatto et al. (2017) refer to this shift as an international 'placement turn' privileging school experience over other ITE aspects. Advocates highlight similarities to clinical experience models, although there is still debate over whether such approaches are reductionist and whether notions of 'best practice' can be mapped across to pedagogy (McLean Davies et al., 2015; Burn and Mutton, 2015).

Questions can also be raised as to whether such 'research-turns' require refocusing partnership and ITE on placements. Here, arguments such as Menter's (2017) that HEI input to ITE involves the 'maximisation of reason' through teaching as research activity, are viewed as preferable to those where teachers are positioned solely as practitioners translating theory into practice. Relationships and sharing of power and responsibilities within collaborative partnerships enacted around PST placements can be seen as related to such political and epistemological debates, requiring an understanding of how such conversations act to constrain or define positions between partners.

Theoretical framework

Positioning Theory (Harré, 2004) posits that rights, duties and obligations governing action and speech manifest through power relations. As individual responses to experience are grounded in the social world, 'individuals have differential access to the positions of power that afford the experience' (Holland et al., 1998, 155). While positivist notions assume 'decisionistic' relationships between knowledge and policy (Fischer, 1993 cited in Hastings, 1998) Positioning Theory challenges that objective, unbiased relationships between 'policy-knowledge' and 'practical-reality' exist (Hastings, 1998). Highlighted here are positions between policy and action; language shapes and is shaped by societal practices and thus, positions locate self and others. For example, the term 'placement' offers positions that might, on the one hand, point to a position of diminished power and responsibility for the PST: being 'placed' may denote lesser status as one has been 'allocated' thus diminishing agency. Ensuing practice may challenge or reinforce such positioning.

As placements are a social act, Positioning Theory helps to understand how individuals sense-make. It is a method for understanding stated deliberation (Luberda, 2000). Wider placement narratives (e.g., from government) bound available positions. These coerce individuals to act in recognisable and acceptable ways. Positions are thus not wholly unbound. Placements offer positions for partners to take up, resist, amend, or subvert. Once a position is adopted, the world is thus viewed with attendant rights, duties, and obligations. This does not deny agency though:

> the person is not viewed as being 'subjected' to pre-existing…narratives, but rather as *subjectively* constructing these... In doing this, the person constructs him- or herself as agent *and* subject, that is, as somebody who is accountable for his or her actions and words. (Bamberg 2004, 335 *emphasis in original*)

In the context of placement collaboration, Positioning Theory draws attention to: the HEI-tutor role while PSTs work in schools; general roles for holistic joint working; and the exercise of power and control in a bound system. As such, Positioning Theory uncovers how partnership might be collaborative and highlights where tensions or imbalances may be intrinsic to the relationship and where they can shift over time.

Methods

The MQuITE Project's aim is to identify a context specific conceptualisation of ITE quality. Given the importance of the Donaldson Report (Donaldson, 2010) for Scotland, the project expands on a six-part framework for measuring quality in ITE (Feuer et al., 2013) by adding partnership as a distinct component. Partnership questions were asked in the early stages of the project in surveys of HEI-based teacher educators and school-based mentors. While the project continues today by tracking two cohorts of PSTs through their early careers, the data discussed here are a snapshot from 2018.

The 2018 survey was drafted by two members of the project steering group and piloted with other HEI-staff. It included open questions so data might be revisited throughout the life of the project considering questions arising from annual cohort tracking surveys. The survey was disseminated online by members of the project steering group: each ITE-HEI is represented by at least one person enabling dissemination via cascade. As with all self-selecting surveys, bias might occur if one group is disproportionately represented. There was slight under-representation from two HEIs and some over representation in two others based on the size of their ITE provision, though differences were not substantial. The University of X granted ethical approval, which was endorsed by all partner institutions. The first page of the survey detailed aims and objectives and ethical clearance. All respondents were free to leave the survey at any point and contributions were only logged once the full survey had been completed and submitted. All responses were completely anonymous.

The survey gathered quantitative and qualitative data. This article only uses quantitative data to give brief context for qualitative analysis. Specifically, here we report on responses to five adjectival rating scale responses where means differ based on teacher educators' age, sex, ethnicity, academic qualification, contract status, and previous school mentoring experience. A variable, based on those respondents who gave free-text responses (i.e., those whose data are analysed in this paper), was tested to give some estimate of response bias compared with those who only answered the numerical questions.

The scales of interest are:
Q19. To what extent do you feel there is currently genuine partnership between schools and universities in delivering ITE?

Q20. To what extent do you believe there should be greater partnership between schools and universities in delivering ITE?
Q21. How positive do you believe the culture of partnership is between your university and its partner local authorities/schools?
Q27. To what extent do you believe that placement/site-based experiences support students' holistic development as beginning teachers?
Q32. How supportive do you find school-based staff during placement?

In each case, only those differences found to be statistically significant at $p<.05$ using Mann-Whitney U tests are reported.

Free-text responses were broad, and tended to cover several themes at once, including partnership with schools, PST assessment, staff morale, working conditions, and professional learning provision. Specifically, free-text responses were invited by the prompts:
Q18. Do you have any comments to make about selection procedures?
Q31. Do you have any comments about how assessment on placement might be improved?
Q34. Do you have any other comments about placement/site-based experiences?
Q40. Please provide any other comments you have about the quality of ITE in Scotland.

Engagement with free-text responses was high. There were 365 responses here, with 128 of the 150 respondents making at least one free-text response (85%). Over 16,000 words were analysed.

Using Positioning Theory as a theoretical framework meant filtering these results through procedures of Thematic Analysis (Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas, 2013). This involved a general read-through several times by each author for an overall sense of the data, after which extracts were noted and coded. Codes were then sorted into groups and sub-themes were identified and then linked to over-arching themes of the theoretical framework. For example, variation in the quality of placement experiences for PSTs as a feature of schools' and teachers' practice, coupled with matters of collaboration were linked through the over-arching theme of *holism and the role for joint working*. This process was led by the first

author and checked by the other two. Discussion then focused on positions that highlighted placement articulation.

Results

150 respondents self-identified as teacher educators. It is not possible to determine response rate here as there is no agreed number for HEI-staff involved with ITE across Scotland due to staff deployment practices. Staff were mostly employed on typical HEI contracts for teaching and scholarship (41%) or teaching and research (27%), with 12% of respondents contracted solely for placement visits.

Respondents were fairly homogenous: the vast majority, themselves qualified teachers, completed their own teacher education within Scotland (78%), were typically female (79%) and white Scottish or white British (86%). However, table 1 highlights some potential differences and indicates broadly positive responses to the rating scales listed above. One limitation of a small sample is that small sub-groups can yield statistically significant results. For example, the 61+ age group contains just 17 participants. While mean ratings for Q27 for this group were 8% higher than for younger respondents, such comparisons are based on a small number of respondents.

	Q19 Current partnership genuine	Q20 Should be greater partnership	Q21 Current positive culture of partnership	Q27 Placement supports students' holistic development	Q32 School-based staff supportive
Mean for all respondents (n=150)	3.07	3.99	3.36	4.22	3.70

Differences in mean	12% higher for part-time or fixed-term contracts (n=16)	12% lower for respondents without ITE qualifications (n=22)	No statistically-significant differences	8% higher for age 61+ (n=17) 10% higher for contracted only for school visits (n=18) 10% higher for part-time or fixed-term contracts (n=16)	10% higher for contracted only for school visits (n=18) 10% higher for part-time or fixed-term contracts (n=16)

Table 1: summary of statistically-significant differences in rating scale responses (based on $p<.05$ using Mann-Whitney U test)

The first row shows mean responses for the full sample using 5-point adjectival rating scales (5 is the most positive response). Notably, responses to each scale were positive overall, and very positive to questions #20 (desire for greater partnership) and #27 (that placement supports students' holistic development). The lowest rating was to the question about real and genuine partnership (#19). Generally, differences were minor, though with some standouts.

Some variables returned no statistically significant differences on any of the scales, including differences between whether participants gave a free-text response or only completed the numerical ratings, ethnicity, sex, whether respondents held qualified teacher status, highest academic qualification, whether they had previously worked as school-based mentors, and whether they had received professional development to support their work in schools. Overall, differences were either zero or so minor they were not statistically significant.

There is a slightly higher rating for Q27 from staff in the oldest age category. However, ratings did not seem to increase with age. A lower desire for greater partnership was found for those HEI-tutors with no ITE qualification, possibly indicating that valuing partnership may relate to one's experiences as a PST. Notably, those contracted only for school visits or

on fixed-term contracts (often the same people) gave more positive ratings than permanently employed lecturers; perhaps more time spent in school associates with higher ratings?

From analysis of the qualitative data, three overarching codes emerged:

- the HEI-tutor role while PSTs are on placement;
- holism and the role for joint working;
- power and control.

These codes reflect much of that already noted in the international literature. However, given that Scottish ITE is lauded as embedded in partnership approaches these codes and subsequent discussion question assumptions made by the Scottish ITE community. That they concur internationally is reassuring; as similar issues prevail much can be learnt from elsewhere. However, given the emphasis across Scottish ITE placed on partnership the analysis does provide a somewhat sobering read.

The HEI-tutor role while PSTs are on placement

Whilst on the HEI-driven part of ITE programmes, HEI-tutors often act as instructors, with academic orientation in train and with more than a nod to the practical and vocational. Whilst on placement the HEI-tutor role seems akin to a non-participant observer; one who makes judgements from the perspective of an interested, but disassociated party. While such positions were expressed, many respondents commented that while this role is important, it is not enough to simply observe one-off lessons. Here, a feature of Scottish ITE, 'The Crit', a one-off, jointly observed lesson is challenged for its significance. Questions were asked as to whether this is a suitable method for identifying, supporting, and assisting learning teaching.

> *The practice of 'observing' lessons is unrealistic in the sense that it only gives tutors a snapshot of what is actually going on.*

> *Whilst the process is thorough, we see students only once in school.*

There was clear indication that HEI staff value partnership working that offers a means whereby tutors can deliberate on the placement part of the processes of becoming a teacher. However, also indicated was their desire to be an embedded part of the student ITE experience. Two such quotes illustrate this:

> *Increased tutor visits and one tutor sees a student through from start to finish so that developments can be organised and monitored effectively.*

> *Would like opportunity to complete more observation visits…*

This idea of embeddedness is explored by Roth (2002) to both improve PST practice and develop praxis and its relationship with enduring theory. Some respondents noted that, when placement is organised with more input and collaboration from the HEI tutor, decisions are more appropriate. Joint observations leading to joint summative reports are beneficial for PSTs and for both the school-based mentor and the university tutor.

> *We assess in partnership with the school which means that we don't observe one isolated lesson from our own perspective. We observe with the teacher and consider the standards together when we allocate a grade.*

This view of partnership was echoed in comments that discussed the need for more placement moderation to fully support students. Signalled here was the view that clearer joint working, embedded in collaborative mechanisms is beneficial. This sense of collaboration is a running theme but is unsurprising given the orientation for Scottish ITE.

> *I believe more moderation activity would help ensure parity of tutor expectations and student feedback.*

> *Further clarity about processes and the role of the different types of evidence we see when visiting.*

Holism and the role for joint working

Working together is mirrored in responses exemplifying holistic, informal, and formative processes at the heart of placement-assessment processes. Here sits the view that students

should be at the heart of the endeavour and that how success or otherwise is judged needs to exhibit transparency.

> *I think it is vital that students feel a sense of ownership and involvement in the assessment process. It should be as authentic as possible in terms of supporting them to be critically reflective and self-evaluative career-long.*

A more transparent overview, noting the degree of interpretation needed in early/mid stages of any programme, would go some way to presenting an honest statement of purpose with which partnership groupings can work. Here, context and holism were recurring themes, demonstrating the embedded nature of partnership and placement.

> *Inevitably, students are placed in a range of different contexts. As a tutor, I feel I need not only to be aware of that context, but to consider the impact of that context on the student's ability to fulfil the Standard.*

> *…a more holistic perspective is really needed for fair assessment.*

> *We work well as a team to coordinate visits by other tutors when there are any causes for concern to ensure an holistic view.*

What also emerged was a desire for HEIs and school to have closer ties benefitting both parties. It is notable that while collaboration is desired, no respondents stated what this was or should look like.

> *I would like to see greater dialogue between university tutors and school mentors/supervisors outside of the specific context of the student they have before them: one way to achieve this is to include those school staff within the university programme as participants who are neither teachers nor students, but peers of both.*

HEI-staff also noted that there are significant barriers to developing quality partnerships and placement experiences. These relate to how schools are ordered and constructed and the education system more broadly. There was palpable frustration amongst some respondents that teachers are not given enough time to discharge the mentoring role appropriately.

> *Currently schools are understaffed, under-funded and experiencing high pressure.*

Even though partnership meetings are offered and arranged by tutors, often staff in schools do not attend or cannot attend due to a variety of circumstances in schools.

A face-to-face meeting with the student's mentor early on in the placement would help but given current staffing situations in most schools this is unrealistic.

True partnership 'grows' a student in placement but time/finance does not allow for this.

However, respondents also noted that sometimes expectations and ability in schools do not match with the standards required for high quality ITE placement.

I also feel that some school-based mentors are just not up to the job of supporting students as I have encountered some school-based mentors who have been less than professional in their behaviour and general attitude towards students.

There can be challenges when schools have different expectations, either too high or too low.

What the above questions is conceptual clarity for partnership, placement and, indeed, ITE overall.

Power and control

For some, placement is resonant of power differentials: it highlights issues of control and the ways in which this should be expressed.

The power relations on placement mean that student teachers are often marginalised rather than apprenticed. The placement system means that the uni has no control over the allocation of students to teachers and little control over schools.

On reflection I believe school colleagues feel quite removed from the workings of ITE in Scotland's universities and this is due, I imagine, to the continuation of outdated management from schools… this has served to entrench a divided culture between

schools and university, where tensions between power bases are acted out and hence, a lack of partnership ensues.

Recent work has taken place regarding career pathways (Scottish Government, 2019). Unfortunately, this did not suggest the creation of specialist school-based teacher educators. This may be a significant gap; the creation of specialist teacher educators operating across contexts with clearly defined career trajectories may generate partnerships as envisaged by respondents. This was somewhat suggested by the need for roles and responsibilities to be clearly defined.

Students could be assessed entirely by schools if school mentors were properly trained and supported to do this. They are better placed to make judgements on student practice over the period of the placement than visiting tutors who see students for only one or two lessons.

Teacher educators can provide a wider context for students to expand their ideas beyond the classroom.

While there was no mention of structural change, there was an articulation that identified roles would improve placement experiences. Some respondents indicated that school staff seem reluctant to take on placement roles and responsibilities. Notably, they also felt it necessary for university staff to have an overview of what occurs in ITE. This runs counter to the idea of more collaborative working, but, conversely, presents the roles of each as part of the whole. While HEI tutors desired greater placement partnership at times they seemed unsure how to produce this or whether power could be divested to school-based teacher educators. Thinking here seemed somewhat muddled. As is to be expected, there was no agreement as to the quality of placement or the support of school-based teacher educators. Such matters are reminiscent of subjective experiences and here HEI-tutors are no different to other educators: some will feel that power is used benignly, others less so.

Discussion

The data coalesce around the position of roles and responsibilities and reveal specific storylines indicative of the ways in which ITE placements both construct and are constructed

by the rights, duties, and obligations brought to bear by and on HEI-tutors across Scotland. While international literature is redolent with examples of placement conceptualisation (Ulvik and Smith, 2014), the data here suggest a lack of identification with any one paradigm. While these Scottish HEI-tutors signalled a desire for more partnership quite how this is positioned is unclear. Power seems to circulate between sites and personnel, but it is difficult to identify how partnership, or indeed placements, are to be managed.

Respondents signalled that they and school-staff both have roles in managing placement. Many positioned teachers as accepting the rights, duties, and obligations associated with supporting PSTs; the language used resonates with professional practice that is '*caring*', '*supportive*', '*open*'. They positioned school-based ITE professionals as engaged 'with students', articulating such engagement through the positions they offer those with whom they work (cf. Grudnoff, 2011). HEI tutors noted how teachers work to effect significant PST development through person-centred action.

> *I meet many committed, caring teachers who are invested in the growth of the student. They are wise and coach students with a good balance of encouragement and sound advice.*

Such wisdom resonates with the aspiration that every teacher should be a teacher educator (Donaldson, 2010), governed by duty that extends beyond teaching children and young people. For some respondents, teacher agency extends into relationships with PSTs. As one respondent noted '*[s]ome mentors go above and beyond the call of duty to support their students' to support professional learning.*'

Some HEI-tutors aspire to development in the way school-staff work and interact with them. They expressed desire to see '*greater dialogue*' between the two groups '*…outside of the specific context of the student they have before them*'. Here partnership working becomes the focus. Much more than simply engaging with placement experience, it becomes shared experience: '*…include those school staff within the university programme as participants who are neither teachers nor students, but peers of both*'. Such perspectives signal role-sharing not only while students are on placement but through responsibility for PST development irrespective of location. This power sharing and joint responsibility re-

positions relationships between school and HEI whereby placements centre on 'the intentional and careful construction of new placement roles and responsibilities, which disrupted the traditional placement triad of the PST, the school-based mentor and the university supervisor' (Grudnoff, Haigh, and Mackisack, 2017). The data above note the desire to reposition placement, and indeed partnership, as an experience that brings all together in a shared endeavour.

The language used positioned the HEI-staff/school-staff relationship as equal to '*continue to develop positive relationships with partnership schools to share and discuss expectations*'. '*More collaboration*' was urged to triangulate assessment, for example. Here LilleJord and Børte's (2016) 'third-space' ideas come into play. As with Grudnoff et al. (2017, 189), such theories call on new forms of collaboration centred on '…notions of boundary crossing and hybrid spaces…' that require reformed relationships between all parties. Notably, while such theories note the rights, duties, and obligations of both groups, they also note how power is not 'held' by any one actor, but rather circulates. It is less a matter, for example, of negotiating the 'right' grade as a snapshot of PST performance and more a negotiation of how context should be interpreted with respect to performance against professional standards.

Less optimistically, international literature highlights that HEI-tutors may position school-staff as lacking; as professionals unable (or unwilling) to take up the positions offered by placement (cf. Allen, 2011). Whether such positions desire amendments to collaboration, or a rejection thereof, is not clear. Here, Scottish HEI-staff recognise that for some school-staff, placement rights, duties, and obligations are simply not enacted: '*I've also been in schools that are a bit dull, where teachers are going through the motions, and where they're not terribly interested in students*'. Some go further and question the assessment role of school-staff, expressing a belief that this is the role for the HEI-tutor alone.

Questions must be asked about collaborative working, and power sharing. While the intention for Scottish ITE placements is that they are a mutual experience between school and HEIs, respondents here acknowledge that distinct roles for each organisation might be beneficial. The rights, duties, and obligations expressed sometimes call to contradictory

positions for partnership conducted through the auspices of 'us' and 'them'. This does not resonate with notions of boundary crossing or 'third-space', but rather, a segmented arrangement. Quite what this means for power differentials was not articulated; it can be noted for some HEI-tutors, ultimate 'ownership' of ITE is assumed to rest with them.

Nevertheless, positioning teachers as lacking was by no means the norm. Rather, what was highlighted were the ways schools are currently configured, staffed, or funded and subsequent impact on the time and wherewithal of school-based teacher educators. Here, again reminiscent of co-operative working, the teacher is positioned as the victim of a system that seeks not to collaborate, with HEI-tutor as primary partner undertaking duties that school-staff cannot or will not do. HEI-tutors both question the ability of school-staff to mentor and whether there are binding factors preventing schools from acting in such ways.

Implications

The data here reveal insights into the complexities and contradictions that come into play when Scottish approaches to placement are considered by HEI-tutors. The positions they adopt indicate views on, and aspirations for, the development of a system able to support PSTs in their journey towards qualification. Such views resonate internationally but are challenging in the Scottish climate. The sharp rhetorical focus given to partnership as the main defining feature positions Scottish ITE as an educational activity replete in its avowal that ITE is not 'done' in HEIs and 'practised' in schools but is a collaborative effort between sites and people. Much has been staked on this approach and sits in contrast to mechanisms in countries where HEIs are criticised for over-emphasising theory (e.g., Department for Education, 2010).

HEI-tutors acknowledge that that how parties work together to design a pathway for PSTs is crucial in determining the success of an ITE programme. That ITE programmes are located in HEIs in Scotland was never questioned by HEI-tutors (nor by school-staff in their equivalent survey (Kennedy, 2019)). This suggests that both are keen for partnership to continue. Highlighted by HEI-tutors, though, is the need to organise differently as questions are asked about school-staffs' ability to engage with partnership working as currently enacted. While this does not call into question partnership per se, the data indicate frustration in so acting.

The idea of 'third-space' might be one which can be readily utilised to both examine and redesign partnership working.

Internationally, placements operate as part of an interactional web between schools and HEIs. In some jurisdictions, ITE is school-centred and posit questions about how PSTs are permitted and supported to reflect on their time in school. If such reflection merely occurs as part of the school experience, this may be limiting. Where HEIs are involved, such space might well be evident. However, for Scotland questions remain as to whether partnership engenders this or offers barriers. While Scottish ITE, since the Donaldson Report (2010) has a clear basis in partnership and HEI tutors are clearly supportive, desire does not always match reality. While the same might be said in other jurisdictions, for a system that has placed so much faith in partnership and collaboration, this is potentially troublesome.

Conclusion

This paper details views of HEI-based ITE staff in Scotland around partnership and PST placement. Data were gathered as part of a wider project that seeks to uncover the perspectives of PSTs, school-staff, and HEI-staff on a range of matters pertaining to ITE processes. As Scotland is small population-wise, it is easier to garner such views; there were only nine HEIs undertaking ITE at the time and thus the distribution of questionnaires presented fewer problems than for a larger population. HEIs work with many different schools who themselves work with several different HEIs creating a complex but mostly cohesive web. Comparisons with larger, more fragmented ITE systems may therefore be limited. Nevertheless, there appear to be consistent positions that illuminate similarities and contrasts with other placement arrangements. Results here indicate that HEI-staff remain keen to work in partnership with schools so that PSTs might benefit from high quality placement experiences. This said, they indicate that partnership does not always operate as it might, mostly due to matters such as workload, which prevent school-staff from fully discharging their duties. However, when placements work well, they are seen as an invaluable part of the PST experience. For placement within partnership to be taken seriously, the way in which time is allocated to all staff needs to be re-visited.

HEI-staff display the belief that partnership working is beneficial to all through the articulation of a vision for the shared operationalisation of Scottish ITE. However, the data also show tensions in the way roles are positioned currently. HEI staff note the benefits of collaboration but seem also reluctant to give up power and control. Whether this is because programmes 'belong' to HEIs or whether this reflects concerns about the capacity of school-based staff is not fully identifiable here and warrants further study.

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