

## **Teacher Professional Learning in Pursuit of the Common Good: A Discussion of the Role of demonstration schools in Teacher Education**

### **La formation professionnelle des enseignants comme recherche du bien commun : discussion du rôle des écoles de stages dans la formation des enseignants**

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Volume 47, numéro 1, winter 2012

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1011666ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1011666ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Faculty of Education, McGill University

ISSN

0024-9033 (imprimé)

1916-0666 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Loughland, T. (2012). Teacher Professional Learning in Pursuit of the Common Good: A Discussion of the Role of demonstration schools in Teacher Education. *McGill Journal of Education / Revue des sciences de l'éducation de McGill*, 47(1), 53–68. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1011666ar>

Résumé de l'article

Le gouvernement fédéral de l'Australie a récemment mis sur pied des Centres d'excellence en formation des enseignants. Ces centres représentent un transfert de pouvoirs dans le domaine de la formation des enseignants, des bureaucraties centralisées et facultés universitaires vers les écoles. En regard de ce changement, il est intéressant de faire l'examen d'autres modèles de formation des enseignants en milieu scolaire. Historiques ou actuels, les modèles étudiés sont les écoles de stages d'Angleterre, des États-Unis et de l'Australie ainsi que les écoles de développement professionnel américaines. Cet article présente les deux modèles ainsi qu'une étude de cas détaillée sur les opérations d'une école de stages située à Sydney en Australie. La présentation des deux modèles et l'étude de cas supportent les leçons tirées des modèles historiques. En effet, ceux-ci soutiennent que les initiatives dans ce domaine requièrent un support à long terme pour développer le dynamisme nécessaire à la concrétisation des changements culturels requis à long terme.

# TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN PURSUIT OF THE COMMON GOOD: A DISCUSSION OF THE ROLE OF DEMONSTRATION SCHOOLS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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**ABSTRACT.** The Federal Government in Australia has recently established Centres for Excellence in Teacher Education. These Centres represent a power shift towards schools in teacher education and away from centralised bureaucracies and university faculties of education. Given this shift, it is interesting to examine other historical and current school-based models of teacher education, specifically demonstration schools in the United Kingdom, United States, and Australia and professional development schools in the United States. This paper discusses both models with a detailed case study of the operation of one demonstration school in Sydney, Australia. The discussion and case study reinforces the lessons of the historical models that initiatives in this area need long-term support so that they can develop the momentum necessary to achieve the long-term cultural change required.

## LA FORMATION PROFESSIONNELLE DES ENSEIGNANTS COMME RECHERCHE DU BIEN COMMUN : DISCUSSION DU RÔLE DES ÉCOLES DE STAGES DANS LA FORMATION DES ENSEIGNANTS

**RÉSUMÉ.** Le gouvernement fédéral de l'Australie a récemment mis sur pied des Centres d'excellence en formation des enseignants. Ces centres représentent un transfert de pouvoirs dans le domaine de la formation des enseignants, des bureaucraties centralisées et facultés universitaires vers les écoles. En regard de ce changement, il est intéressant de faire l'examen d'autres modèles de formation des enseignants en milieu scolaire. Historiques ou actuels, les modèles étudiés sont les écoles de stages d'Angleterre, des États-Unis et de l'Australie ainsi que les écoles de développement professionnel américaines. Cet article présente les deux modèles ainsi qu'une étude de cas détaillée sur les opérations d'une école de stages située à Sydney en Australie. La présentation des deux modèles et l'étude de cas supportent les leçons tirées des modèles historiques. En effet, ceux-ci soutiennent que les initiatives dans ce domaine requièrent un support à long terme pour développer le dynamisme nécessaire à la concrétisation des changements culturels requis à long terme.

The Federal Government in Australia has recently established policy control of teacher professional learning through targeting funding tied to the National Partnership Agreement on Improvement of Teacher Quality (Council of Australian Governments, 2009). The warrant underpinning the pursuit of Teacher Quality emanates from the paradigm of evidence-based research with their foundational premise that it is the teacher that makes the biggest difference to student outcomes (Rowe, 2003). The new policy also acknowledges that educational reform at the whole-school level is important. The Federal Government has signalled this through the establishment of Centres for Excellence in schools that have demonstrated evidence of quality teaching and learning in recent years. These “hub” schools are given extra funding for two years and charged with the responsibility of driving professional learning in a network involving three to five other schools.

Each of the Centres for Excellence has a Highly Accomplished Teacher (HAT) who leads the professional learning initiatives for both pre-service and in-service teachers in the network. Included in their role description is the task of liaising with partner universities who are involved in pre-service teacher education. Historically, the universities have been responsible for liaising with schools for professional experience placements whilst centralised Departments of Education have been responsible for the professional learning of in-service teachers. This shift of power in pre-service teacher education and professional learning to schools signals an important shift in policy for the Federal Government in Australia. This echoes other historical models of school-based teacher education and professional learning including the demonstration school model.

Demonstration schools have existed in various guises since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Edwards, 1991). The most common term in Europe, Asia, the US and Latin America used for schools where teacher training occurs is normal school. The first ‘*école normale*’ was established in France in 1794 by a decision from the National Convention “to create in Paris an *école normale* where citizens of the Republic already instructed in the useful sciences should be taught to teach” (Edwards, 1991, p. 239). In contrast, demonstration schools are a relatively unknown and unrecorded British historical phenomena as “the term ‘normal school’ never attained the same degree of popularity in Britain as it did in France and the United States” (Edwards, 1991, p. 243). It seems that by sole virtue of its British history, demonstration schools still exist today in Sydney, Australia. In more recent decades, professional development schools have been one of the more prominent expressions of school-university partnerships in the USA. All of these partnerships mentioned here have had a focus on pre-service and in-service teacher education.

This article discusses the role of demonstration schools and professional development schools in teacher education and professional learning before presenting a case study of one demonstration school that has been operating

in Sydney, Australia for 36 years. The purpose of this discussion and case study is to distill the lessons learnt from these historical models and offer them as a counterpoint to current developments in Australia as represented by the Centres for Excellence. The conclusions offered relate to the pedagogy and governance of school-based initiatives in teacher education and professional learning.

## THE HISTORICAL ROLE OF DEMONSTRATION SCHOOLS

This discussion of demonstration schools commences with the literature published during the heyday of the demonstration school experiment in England during the period 1890-1926. It then moves on to examine another brief appearance of demonstration schools in the American education research literature in the period 1925-1950. Finally, the discussion examines the operation of another school-based model of teacher education in the professional development schools in the US.

The demonstration appellation can be misleading as the intention of the originators of the Fielden demonstration school in England in the early 1900s was not to create a school where the “demonstration of approximately perfect methods are exhibited for the instruction of students by approximately perfect teachers” (excerpt from HMI Report of Inspection 17 November 1908 cited in A. Robertson, 1992, p.375). Professor Findlay of Victoria University at Manchester created the most extensive written record of the demonstration school experiment in England during the period 1890-1926. Professor Findlay was interested in student teachers’ learning through practice; “when he talked of ‘laboratory,’ Findlay was thinking of the context of learning and discovery in an open-minded and collaborative way, rather than of experimental method in a scientific sense” (A. Robertson, 1992, p. 365). This sense of a collective enterprise for the common good is reflected in the diaspora of demonstration schools that are reported in the literature.

Historians of education have applied the term “experiment” to the English period, as it seems Findlay’s Fielden demonstration school operated outside of the operational parameters of both the Department of Education and the university. Both institutions were unsure of where the demonstration school aligned with their respective visions for teacher education. The Department of Education was interested in meeting regulations and minimum requirements for trainee teachers whilst universities were keen to promote the fledgling field of education research. Inevitably, there was a tension between the two aims, a tension that persists to the present day. Findlay established the demonstration school partly as a response to what he saw as the failings of both models of teacher education:

He recognised that although the universities trained teachers, they were in reality the agents of central government. This had unsatisfactory side effects in that government wanted close adherence to narrow regulations, an output

it could measure and most ominous of all from the University perspective, showed no interest in educational research. (A. Robertson, 1992, p. 370)

Findlay was a strong critic of both the school-based apprenticeship model as well as the university-based model with its emphasis on the theoretical foundations of education. To paraphrase Britzman's title of her seminal text on teacher identity (Britzman, 2003), Findlay argued that practice just makes practice unless there is a serious effort on the part of the practitioner to interrogate this practice. At the same time, Findlay rallied against the theory-before-practice model popular in universities. This is not to suggest Findlay was opposed to theory (A. Robertson, 1992).

Findlay regarded the demonstration school as a site where the student-teacher could study educational theory through the observation and critical reflection of practice, both their own and other teachers'. In reality, demonstration was not the most accurate title for the type of discursive professional learning activities that Findlay and his colleagues conducted at Fielden. The emphasis was on the reasoned discussion of practice rather than a mere one-off demonstration by the demonstrator or student-teacher. As Findlay described it, "evaluation of teaching should derive from 'free debate' between student, lecturer, demonstrator and class teacher" (A. Robertson, 1992, p. 363).

Findlay's notion and practice of a demonstration school could be read as being an example of a community of practice established around the practice of teaching. This community of practice included the student teacher, classroom teacher and university teacher educator. The relaxation of the status divisions that separated these three practitioners was a major achievement of Findlay's model. This provided the foundation for productive learning discussions on pedagogy. These discussions were founded on Findlay's belief that the demonstration school was the most appropriate site to bring the art (practice) of teaching together with the science (theory) of teaching. This account of Findlay's contribution is supported by Robinson (2004): "A demonstration school provided space and time for reflection, discussion and debate about pedagogy and also opened up numerous possibilities for curriculum innovation, research into child development and experimentation" (p. 86). Robinson also provides an explanation for the demise of the demonstration school experiment in England in 1926: "contested control, inadequate funding and conflicting interests made the practical actualization of the ideal virtually impossible" (p. 86). As the experiment waned in England, it waxed in the US.

### *Demonstration schools in the US*

There are three articles from the period 1925-1950 that specifically focus on the role of demonstration schools in the US, mainly in relation to their use as centres for in-service education for teachers. This may be due to the presence of normal schools and teacher colleges that were set up for that purpose. The

demonstration schools referred to in the papers reviewed are from the diverse geographical locations of Seattle, New Jersey, and Baton Rouge.

The representation of demonstration schools in the articles from the US do not allude to any role they had with pre-service teachers. This indicates that there were no relationships established with universities. In common with the English model, however, there is a debate on the worth of demonstration as a strategy for professional learning. In this sense, the two papers from the 1920s referring to the Trenton and Seattle demonstration schools offer enthusiastic support whilst the 1950s paper is a little more critical of this professional-learning model.

Both the Trenton and Seattle demonstration schools were described as sites where in-service training occurred with teaching methods that were approved by the respective departments of education. There was a definite move away from the in-school trial of experimental methods signalled in both papers, here exemplified in West's (1925) writing on Trenton:

It was made clear from the start that this school was being organized not as an experimental school in which new ideas would be tried out but as a demonstration school in which could be found the methods and technique advocated in the courses of study and by the school official. (p. 623)

The demonstration schools in the US were established as instruments of the state, "attempting to exemplify through classroom work methods and procedures that receive the approval of the administration" (Smith, 1928, p. 268). West set out five advantages of the demonstration school model for teacher professional learning:

1. It provides an organized situation in which are being worked out the methods and policies of the school system.
2. It concentrates in one building the most effective teaching being done in the school system.
3. It gives to the visiting teachers an opportunity to see good technique and organization throughout an entire school.
4. It provides the basis for a discussion of classroom practices between teachers, principals, and supervisors.
5. It sets up in the school system a definite standard toward which all of the teachers may aim. (West, 1925, p. 626)

Smith (1928) reported that teachers enjoyed demonstration lessons under real conditions, preferring them over teacher meetings for the purposes of professional learning. In a survey of 100 hundred visitors to the Summit Demonstration School, Smith found that 61% of respondents believed that it was "much easier to evaluate educational principles and technique of classroom procedures when they are witnessed in a working situation than when they are merely discussed or read" (Smith, 1928, p. 271). So it seems from these accounts that the primary method for professional learning was for local and visiting teachers to observe a demonstration lesson given by another teacher.

These demonstration lessons then set the standard for the district to aspire to, another clear indication of the instrumentality of the demonstration school in this model.

It is in the discursive practices of the teachers in the US demonstration schools that we see a similarity to the UK model. Smith (1928) described the importance of the post-lesson conferences where the visitors and the demonstration teacher could engage in critical dialogue; “opportunity for criticisms and suggestions must be given visitors through the conference periods following the demonstration” (Smith, 1928, p. 272). This echoes Findlay’s argument on the importance of establishing a dialogue that surpasses the one-off inspection of a lesson: “All criticism lessons and lessons before inspectors, prepared on the understanding that the period so taken is a complete and finished affair, are to be condemned” (Findlay, 1913, as cited in A. Robertson, 1992, p. 363).

After one-year of operation of the Trenton demonstration school, West (1925) confidently predicted that “the demonstration school will prove to be the foundation of the training in service which can be carried on in our school system” (pp. 624 - 625). From a review of the historical record, it is not possible to provide a warrant for this claim. However, it is also quite conceivable that a model that was so embedded in the school system might not appear in the education research literature emanating from the academy. Demonstration schools do not appear in the record until 1950, when J. B. Robertson offered a critique of the operation of demonstration schools in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. His critique centred around what he regarded as the use of the demonstration school as a panacea for all under-performing teachers (J. B. Robertson, 1950). Robertson claimed that the demonstration lesson was overly focused on teaching techniques rather than on the broader purposes of teaching. To overcome this, he suggested that equal time be granted to the orientation and group planning processes, as “it would give the person who is to do the demonstration teaching an opportunity to share the thinking of the persons who are to observe” (J. B. Robertson, 1950, p. 236).

This emphasis on collective discussion about teaching practices is a clear theme in the genealogy of demonstration schools. Whilst there seems to be a consensus on the pedagogy of professional learning employed in demonstration schools, their political role in teacher education is up for debate. Professor Findlay at Fielden established a model of teacher education that philosophically and logistically was positioned outside both the state and university, whereas the US demonstration schools were established to play a key role as professional development schools within the state system of education. More recently a teacher educator in the UK cited the demonstration school model to support contemporary shifts towards more school-based teacher education in the UK. Robinson asserts that “it might be more helpful to rethink the recent shift towards school-based training as part of a much longer historical and professional

tradition of the teacher as trainer” (2006, p. 27). In another text, Robinson argued that initial teacher training schools in the UK introduced in 2000 and 2001 might be more able to realise the demonstration school ideal given the certainty of centralised funding as well as the technological affordances available in the current time (Robinson, 2004).

Robinson’s work in this area is helpful as it draws attention to the political investments of the stakeholders that have been involved in the debate over the operation of demonstration schools. Political investments from the Universities have been a key driver in the formation of another school-based initiative in teacher education, that of professional development schools in the US.

### *Professional development school*

The Holmes Group, a consortium of large US universities offering teacher education courses, established professional development schools (PDS) in the USA in the mid 1980s. PDS share many goals in common with the original demonstration schools in that they focus on professional learning for both pre-service and in-service teachers. This professional learning is a democratic dialogue of inquiry with equal input from school and university-based teacher educators. There have been many articles published in this journal that point to the successful features of the PDS. These include the collaboration and community established among teachers, the shift to uncertainty attendant with the culture of inquiry, and the benefits of mentoring pre-service teachers.

Collaboration between teachers in a professional learning community is claimed to be one of the benefits of PDS. Snow-Gerono (2005), in her research on a PDS collaborative “between a north-eastern university and four elementary schools” (p. 243) identified a clear shift to community among the teachers in her study in contrast to the professional isolation that she regarded as problematic. In a similar vein during the previous decade, Bullough, Kauchak, Crow, Hobbs and Stokes (1997) found that a professional learning co-operative program resulted in improved professional learning for teachers. They hypothesised the reasons for the effectiveness of the Co-op program as being “the length (over two years) and intensity of the program, shared communal cohort experience, continuity among Co-op leaders, academic rigor, the applied nature of the course work, and opportunities to do systematic school-based research” (Bullough et al., 1997, p. 162). It must be acknowledged here that the authors also noted the “consistent and persistent hard work involved” (Bullough et al., 1997, p. 165) for all parties to create a shared vision that allow these outcomes to happen.

The promotion of a culture of inquiry in PDS means that a shared vision can also involve a productive dissensus, Snow-Gerono (2005) has argued. In this conceptualization, teachers are empowered to question their own practices, curriculum mandates, and school policies. Dissensus requires a scholarly humility and voice that has not always been associated with teachers working



in structured hierarchies. It would seem that such a shift to uncertainty on the part of teachers, as posited by Snow-Geronomo, reflects the type of professional learning culture enabled by PDS, which Sandholtz (2002) identified in her study as rated most valuable by teachers. The induction of pre-service teachers into a like culture of inquiry is also regarded as an important outcome of PDS.

Mentoring a pre-service teacher is regarded as being a useful act of professional learning. Reflective practice is promoted when teachers need to explain their practice to others (Bullough et al., 1997; Sandholtz, 2002). When this reflective practice takes place in a professional culture of inquiry in PDS, then the benefits are magnified for both teachers and pre-service teachers (Mule, 2006; Snow-Gerono, 2005). Both Mule and Snow-Gerono point to the importance of establishing a future generation of teachers accustomed to working in an open culture of inquiry. However, Mule (2006) regards this transition as being problematic: “participating in an inquiry while at the same time dealing with the challenges of teaching as a novice teacher can be stressful and overwhelming to interns” (Mule, 2006, p. 214). Bullough et al. (1997) also regard the establishment of PDS in challenging school communities that have the most disadvantaged students as posing troubling ethical and pedagogical questions. The ethical question centres on students being taught by the most inexperienced beginning teachers, and the pedagogical issue on the limited opportunity for interns to develop their skills when they are challenged on many other fronts, such as classroom management, planning, and the completion of university assignments (Bullough et al., 1997).

In summary, the PDS project in the US has provided a rigorous body of research that supports the establishment of robust school-university partnerships. These partnerships create and sustain collaborative communities of practice that support teacher professional learning for interns as well as veteran teachers. In common with the demonstration school movement, the PDS involves a realignment of existing resources and stakeholders. The question of resources becomes an important factor when government budgets for education are contracting rather than expanding. A model supported by a robust research base such as the PDS project is therefore important for teacher educator reformers in other countries who wish to create or sustain school-university partnerships. One such partnership is the focus of the next section of this paper.

#### **CASE STUDY: NORTH SYDNEY DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL**

Australian teacher education for its first 100 years was characterised, at the primary level in particular, by close relations between teachers’ colleges and schools. These relationships were boosted by the establishment of “training schools.” In Sydney, the Sydney Teachers College was formed in 1906 and moved onto the campus of the University of Sydney in 1920.

The move of the Sydney Teachers College to the University seemed to indicate a political shift in Sydney in the control of teacher education from schools to the university. However, the Faculty of Education and the Teachers College remained separate entities until the 1990s. This separation is still reflected in the structure of the Bachelor of Education courses today, which are comprised of the three strands of Education Studies, Curriculum, and Professional Experience.

The demarcation between professional education and the intellectual study of education was similarly maintained throughout Australia where teacher training was carried out in purpose-built teachers' colleges. These teacher colleges maintained good relations with selected local schools for the purposes of demonstration lessons. These schools were given the designation of demonstration schools by their state jurisdiction. In this aspect, they resembled the instrumentalist model of demonstration schools evident in the United States in the mid 1900s, where the state sought to exert some control over the conduct of teacher education. However, one of these demonstration schools in North Sydney was established in accord with the English tradition to the extent of the adoption of the model of governance. This is evident in the wider scope of its operations, which has gone beyond the presentation of demonstration lessons to visiting teachers and pre-service teachers.

North Sydney Demonstration School (NSDS) was established in accordance with an agreement between the Director General of Education and the Vice Chancellor of the University of Sydney. The Agreement commenced operation in 1975 and its most recent revision was in 1992. The original agreement between NSDS and the University of Sydney defined eight areas of co-operating interest: student practice teaching; microteaching; systematic observation; research and development on teaching, learning and curriculum; co-operative staffing and shared resources; in-service education activities; communication and dissemination; and exploration of school-university cooperation (University of Sydney & New South Wales [NSW] Department of Education, 1975).

Another clear reminder of English influence was the establishment of an Advisory Committee to oversee and guide the operation of the NSDS. This Advisory Committee, remarkably similar in composition to the one convened over 100 years ago at Fielden, is responsible for overseeing the joint program in teaching and research between the School and University. It meets a minimum of four times per year to discuss and approve details of proposals and monitor the ongoing effectiveness of the partnership. In its ideal incarnation, it is a forum for the exchange of ideas among the four key stakeholders in the school: the NSW Department of Education, the University, the school, and its parent representatives.

The Advisory Committee filed annual reports, and an article was published on the NSDS (Jensen & Bee, 1981) in the *School and Community News*. The Jensen and Bee article describes a school that is more experimental than

instrumental and more like Fielden in England than the US demonstration schools. The article featured school-based curriculum development, an open school policy for parents to visit anytime, pedagogical research, and freedom for teachers to choose the composition and philosophical approach of their class. The aims and objectives of teachers' particular philosophical approaches had to be explained in a letter to the parents and justified to the Advisory Committee. This freedom for teachers and the access given to parents to classrooms is emblematic of the experimental aspect of the demonstration school.

Jensen and Bee (1981) described a school in which all community members, aside from the students, had genuine influence over important decisions in the school. The key intellectual exchange in the demonstration school today is between the teachers and teacher-educators. This professional learning exchange between teachers and teacher-educators is a settlement that is far from the utopia inscribed in the partnership agreement but is nevertheless regarded as an achievement in a political climate in which the work of teachers and teacher educators on the whole has become increasingly bound by the dictates of state policy rather than democratic professionalism (Connell, 2009).

As recompense for additional duties and expertise, teaching staff at the school were (and are) paid an additional "demonstration" allowance by the University. This "demonstration loading" is an interesting aspect of the partnership especially in the light of the current Federal Government's funding of school-based Centres for Excellence in professional learning, in which significant new funding is tied to professional learning and student outcomes. Part of this funding is a type of demonstration loading paid to a "Highly Accomplished Teacher" in the school who will be the conduit for a professional learning exchange with a local teacher education faculty and the other schools involved. It appears that the professional learning collective is favoured over individual acknowledgement in which everyone (rather than just one teacher) is paid an allowance.

One of the key principles and points of tension in the governance of the University of Sydney-NSDS partnership is teacher selection. The University has a voice on merit selection panels that decide on the particular quality of teacher that will sustain and develop the partnership. The right of the university for representation on selection panels was debated strongly in 1985 with the University having to contest its right to participate on selection panels. One voice in a panel of four does not seem like a large political concession for the NSW Department of Education and Training to make. However, it is important given the tight controls that the NSW Department of Education and Training and the teacher's union has exerted on the selection and promotion of teachers in the state of NSW for 150 years. This has meant that many of the vacant positions for classroom teachers have been filled by a merit selection process rather than through internal transfer or through selection by the staffing

system. As well, the presence of the university-based teacher educator on the interview panels has resulted in professional learning being a key criterion for selection of teachers.

At NSDS, the existence of the Advisory Committee, the demonstration award, and the presence of faculty from the University of Sydney on staff selection panels have created an overarching ethos of partnership that distributes the responsibility for the partnership beyond the Principal/Executive and ensures a legitimacy for access to the University of Sydney for all staff. The presence and specificity of the agreement provides a shared framework that reduces the needs of either teachers or lecturers to defend the importance and integrity of their respective professional knowledge and practices.

### LESSONS FROM THE DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL MODEL

Contemporary reforms in school-based teacher education and professional learning should recognize the historical models that have come before it. The demonstration schools and PDS are models of school-based teacher education that have an important contribution to make to the development of contemporary initiatives in school-university partnerships in terms of pedagogy and governance. Both models emphasise the collective good over the individual and are part of the practice architectures that contribute to partnerships that work towards a praxis of teacher education. In contrast, the current imposition of standards and policies from the Australian Federal Government in relation to professional learning pays scant attention to the collective conditions in which these ambitious targets might be met. This distancing of the bureaucracy from the responsibility of implementation, which is the case with these targets for professional learning, was identified by Habermas (1989) as part of what he described as “the so-called objective constraints that are monetarizing and bureaucratizing more and more domains of life and increasingly transforming relationships into commodities and objects of administration” (Habermas, 1989, p. 44). The models of the PDS and demonstration schools discussed in this article provide historical evidence that productive working relationships are more important to the longevity of professional learning partnerships than the imposition of targets.

Unfortunately, as Habermas (1989) has argued, bureaucratic control is accompanied by monetarizing control as well. The new Centres for Excellence in Australia are working under our system of tied grants that are linked to short-term performance outcomes. In common with the Australian system of standardized testing, the outcomes cast a long shadow over the processes. In the light of this tighter control of the professional learning agenda, it is interesting to note recorded instances of school-university partnerships that have thrived without external funding. The Australian Project for Enhancing Effective Learning (Erickson, Minnes Brandes, Mitchell, & Mitchell, 2005),

the Coalition of Knowledge Building Schools (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009), and the Canadian Learning Strategies Group (Erickson et al., 2005) are examples of partnerships that have been sustained over time without the help of formal government funding. Indeed, key participants in all projects have acknowledged that this gives them the freedom to create a shared vision that represents the needs of all stakeholders (Erickson et al., 2005; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009). This concept of freedom from overt government control for both teachers and teacher educators was close to the heart of Findlay's Fielden endeavours almost a century ago in Manchester (A. Robertson, 1992).

These reforms in school-based teacher education offer important lessons for the Centres for Excellence currently operating in Australia. This lesson rests on Elmore's (1996, p. 499) argument that one of three policy conceits of educational reformers is "that the newest set of reform policies automatically takes precedence over all previous policies under which the system has operated" (p. 499). This "ahistoricism" is accompanied by the penchant of contemporary neo-liberal governments to focus more on the setting of performative measures rather than taking responsibility for the proper execution of process, including the recognition of historical models. In the complex area of teacher professional learning, this means that their well-funded and possibly well-intentioned performance targets might founder because of the lack of conditions conducive to genuine professional learning in schools:

It is not just whether organizations (like a school, an education system, a medical practice or a professional body) create *learning* architectures that is at stake in the development of *praxis* and practice; it is that their architectures enable and constrain practices *themselves*. (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008, p. 57, emphasis in the original)

Performance benchmarks have been set in the Centres for Excellence, with meagre guidelines on how to create the conditions to achieve these. One guideline is: "Establish/build on existing performance and development systems, cultures and support mechanisms to promote continuous improvement" (Council of Australian Governments, 2009, p. 10). Government policy statements are by their very nature concerned with ends rather than means, so one should not be surprised by the lack of detail included in such benchmarks. However, it is of concern when these benchmarks are directly linked to short-term, tied funding arrangements. This could obviously lead to quite superficial processes of professional learning wherein the focus is on performative targets rather than on the development of sustainable professional learning cultures in schools. In contrast, there are lessons to be learnt from the sound research base underpinning PDS and demonstration schools, which could contribute to effective professional learning practice in the newly established Centres for Excellence in Australia. The most important lesson is that professional learning partnerships need long-term support from government funding without the

imposition of short-term targets. Long-term support will help to establish the kind of trusting relationships between teachers and teacher-educators that can lead to quality professional learning for all involved.

Demonstration schools and PDS's focus on the pedagogies of professional learning, which signals an upward shift in the status of the profession. It constitutes an elevation of the status of teacher professional learning beyond the mechanical and technical terms that have been and are used to describe this activity. Teacher professional learning is still often described as in-servicing or teacher development. The use of these terms denies the professional status of teachers undertaking professional learning in that it positions them as passive subjects of the servicing or development. In contrast, the teachers at both historical and current demonstration schools as well as PDS are active members of a community of practice *on teacher-practice*.

A shift in power relations is also evident for the university-based teacher educators who are active in the North Sydney Demonstration School partnership. Teacher Educators in the partnership context exert greater agency in a school to effect educational outcomes than they do as teachers of pre-service teachers at university because they can directly influence policy and practice. In some ways, the partnership offers a broader and more efficacious expression of what it is that teacher educators can and might do as they contribute to the professional learning of both pre-service and in-service teachers. A future direction might be for the university to offer a demonstration allowance to tenured academics. This would place the bonus on the salary rather than on infrastructure or projects and would formalise the partnership's move to a shared knowledge economy. In the current Federal government model of national partnerships, the university-based teacher educator receives very little recognition or recompense for their services. A cynical observer might even claim that the Australian government is trying to marginalise the role of teacher educators and universities in teacher education. This view is consistent with policy initiatives that have resulted in Australia adopting a version of the US Teach for America program wherein graduate students teach in hard-to-staff schools after a six-week preparatory program (see [www.teachforaustralia.org](http://www.teachforaustralia.org)).

The final area in which demonstration schools might contribute to the practice of school-university partnerships is governance. The Advisory Committee that was established at Fielden in the period 1890-1926 and emulated by North Sydney from 1975 to the present day offers a tested model of governance that encourages a reciprocal intellectual exchange essential to long-term sustainability. The partnership has had its tidal flows wherein one of the main stakeholders has exercised more operational control. However, the broad-based membership of the advisory committee and its transparent processes have served to provide necessary checks on any excesses. This equitable arrangement may be difficult to achieve given the short-term performance outcomes proscribed

in the National Partnership agreement (Council of Australian Governments, 2009). The Federal Government should devote attention to the processes and protocols of governance that will lead to sustainable improvement in student performance outcomes rather than temporary bounces in test results.

## CONCLUSION

Current policy in teacher professional learning should go beyond the mere setting of performance targets that are tied to government funding. This paper has addressed the issue of the incommensurability of such practices in the context of teacher professional learning in Australia. The ahistoricism inherent in the disregard for existent models such as the demonstration school means that well-intentioned and well-funded performance targets might fail because of a lack of attention to existing professional learning cultures in schools; this ultimately constrains the implementation of these reforms.

The demonstration school and the sound research base of the PDS with its store of pedagogies of professional learning and model of governance enact a collective responsibility for the common good of teacher professional learning and student outcomes, which goes beyond the individualism inherent in neo-liberal educational policy:

Professional practitioners like professional educators cannot and should not be made victims of the pursuit of improved 'quality' or 'best practice' as it is defined solely in terms of immediate, current resources and demands. (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008, p. 60)

It is unfortunate that the current welcome increase in Federal Government funding for teacher professional learning in Australia is being tied to the short-term targets of a government that needs to seek re-election every three years. In effect, this creates a body politic wherein the focus is on campaigning rather than policy reform. This political bind may work against the establishment of collaborative, sustainable professional learning cultures that lead to long-term reform rather than short-term targets.

This article has presented a discussion and a case study of examples of robust historical professional learning models. These models demonstrate the pedagogical relationships required to sustain professional learning partnerships between teachers and teacher educators. The task becomes to advocate that current funding from the Federal Government in Australia be re-directed to professional learning partnerships based on these successful historical models. This funding would need to be long-term, allowing for autonomy in setting local goals that work towards achieving long-term cultural change.

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