

11 Transformative partnerships with university schools

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Introduction

In 2015, an international expert committee evaluated the work of the Center for Professional Learning in Teacher Education (ProTed) after it had served as a Centre for Excellence in Higher Education for five years. The committee described the development of ProTed’s “university school” concept as “the jewel in ProTed’s crown.” The committee also emphasized that university schools play a crucial role in the curriculum design and practice of research-informed integration in teacher education (TE) at the University of Oslo (UiO) and UiT The Arctic University of Norway (UiT) (Lawson et al., 2015, p. ii). Partnerships with university schools have become common in recent years and can consist of somewhat different arrangements, from small-scale and individual-oriented projects to larger system-level collaborations (Farrell, 2021; Green et al., 2020; Smith, 2016). Despite decades of testing and research on different partnership models, the education field still requires more research on innovations and genuine partnerships (Zeichner, 2021).

Jones et al. (2016) distinguish between connective, generative, and transformative partnerships. The ProTed model follows the third approach, which features collaboration and the “active involvement of all partner members in the planning and delivery of curriculum for the purpose of professional learning”; such an approach should also be “ongoing and embedded in the programs of the collaborating institutions” (Jones et al., 2016, p. 115).

Within ProTed’s model for transformative partnerships with university schools, a small number of schools are chosen from a wider pool of partner schools (based on applications from the interested schools) in order to collaborate on research/development and student teachers’ practice. Currently, UiO has 130 partner schools, of which 18 have a designated status as university schools, while UiT has 40 partner schools, of which 13 are university schools. University schools undertake an extended, binding, and mutual agreement with the TE institution and are thus included in a close and committed partnership. University schools are carefully selected due to their interest in cooperating in the development of TE and in taking a systematic approach to research and development (R&D) work.

The aim of this chapter is to describe ProTed's model for transformative partnerships between TE institutions and a few selected university schools and their owners (typically counties and municipalities in Norway). We also wish to call attention to important findings from research on various activities that have emerged from this type of collaboration.

Previous research on TE has guided the development of ProTed's model for partnerships with university schools, stressing the need to anchor TE in practice to a greater extent than has previously been the case (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Finne et al., 2014; Lid, 2013). Other goals are to develop and use practice-oriented and practice-relevant forms of learning and teaching in on-campus teaching (Forzani, 2014; Jensen et al., 2018; McDonald et al., 2013). The results from each of our local student evaluations and findings in a report on practical training in professional education in Norway (NOKUT, 2018) have indicated great variation in the quality of student teachers' experiences from practical training in schools. A need thus exists to ensure and develop the quality of student teachers' practical training and mentoring in schools. At the same time, TE institutions must collaborate with schools on R&D in schools.

Research has highlighted partnerships between TE institutions and schools as a prerequisite for good TE (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Lillejord & Børte, 2014). The existence of close and committed partnerships between a TE institution and university schools is one way to link TE more closely to the practice in schools. In the white paper "Teacher Education 2025: National Strategy for Quality and Cooperation in Teacher Education," the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (2018) recognized the establishment of close and committed partnership models between TE institutions, a few selected university schools, and school owners as a strategy to ensure ongoing quality development of TE programs and to increase research-based development in schools. ProTed's work with university schools led to this national plan for partnerships with university schools. Since 2010, the national strategy has acknowledged the ProTed model for various partnership experiences. Similar partnership arrangements have been established in every TE institution in Norway.

In the following, we explain ProTed's model for transformative partnerships with university schools by describing how close cooperation with university schools has contributed to the management, development, and implementation of TE programs at UiO and UiT as well as R&D collaboration with schools. The authors of this chapter have all been engaged in various activities in the partnerships at the two TE institutions, and some of us have been responsible for management. As the basis for the description of the ProTed model, we use our own firsthand knowledge of the university school collaboration as well as using records found in previous reports and research publications. Several previous publications have discussed experiences from partnerships with university schools (Andreassen, 2015; Engeliën et al., 2015; Hatlevik, Engeliën, & Jorde, 2020a; Hatlevik, Hunskaar, & Eriksen, 2020b; Hatlevik & Lejonberg, 2019; Hunskaar & Borge, 2015; Hunskaar & Eriksen, 2019;

Jakhelln, 2015; Rørnes, 2013; Andreassen, 2015; Jakhelln et al., 2017; Klemp & Nedberg, 2016; Lejonberg et al., 2017; Lejonberg & Hatlevik, 2022; Lund & Eriksen, 2016; Olsen, 2020, 2021; Steele, 2017, 2018a, 2018b; Sørensen, 2019; Vedeler, 2013, 2022; Vedeler & Reimer, 2023; Vestøl et al., 2015). In line with a design-based research method (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012), our purpose with this chapter is to improve practice by identifying how university schools can contribute to high-quality development of TE programs and ensure the relevance of research for practice. This knowledge will be useful both for further development of UiO's and UiT's own university school partnerships and for other TE institutions.

ProTed's research-based model for transformative partnerships with university schools

Like most TE institutions, UiO and UiT have extensive experience with partnerships with schools about agreements for student teachers' practice placement in school as part of the TE programs. As the first two TE institutions in Norway, UiO and UiT established (in 2009 and 2010, respectively) close and committed partnerships with a few carefully selected schools with a designated status as university schools for a limited period of time. Since the establishment of ProTed in 2011, UiO and UiT have exchanged ideas and inspired each other, forming a common ProTed model for transformative partnerships with university schools.

ProTed's model for university school partnerships was originally inspired by the arrangement of university hospitals, which, together with the university, are responsible for medical education. But unlike medical education, the financial framework dedicated to university school partnerships is very modest. A key challenge for the partnerships is therefore how to create sustainable forms of cooperation with minimal costs and how to design meeting places suitable for collaboration on student teachers' learning and cooperation between schools and universities on R&D work (Hunnskaar & Eriksen, 2019).

A key feature of ProTed's work has been the development of research-based TE. In 2013, a systematic review on behalf of ProTed was commissioned for partnerships in TE from the Knowledge Centre for Education in Norway. This review highlighted a range of preconditions and elements of successful partnerships between TE institutions and schools (Lillejord & Børte, 2014, 2016), as also discussed in Chapter 2. These preconditions and elements of success include having:

1. strong and engaged leadership/coordination and sufficient resources
2. symmetry and equality
3. continuous dialogue in how the collaboration should be formulated and implemented
4. exchanges of services that are meaningful and useful for both schools' and TE institutions' primary social missions

5. mutual and realistic expectations
6. concrete collaborative projects
7. a partnership that is viewed as a dynamic and continuous project
8. the appearance of a “third space”.

Similar descriptions of conditions for successful partnerships may also be found in Jones et al. (2016) and Green et al. (2020). ProTed’s model for transformative partnerships aims to facilitate these preconditions for and elements of success.

A large proportion of partnerships focus on cooperation over students’ practical training and mentoring provision in schools. The overall purpose of ProTed’s transformative model for university school partnerships is to develop quality in both schools and TEs in order to strengthen students’ learning in school and student teachers’ learning in practical training in schools and on campus (Hatlevik, Engelién, & Jorde, 2020a). The transformative model thus aims to alter both schools and TE programs at the university through critical reflection on existing practices and by entering into a mutual collaboration, where the active contributions of both parties are crucial to success. In addition, Jones et al. (2016) have pointed out that long-term transformative partnerships involve joint collaboration on the planning and implementation of TE programs; such programs also facilitate professional development among both student teachers and teacher educators in schools and at the university. Jones et al. have noted that transformative partnerships are generally characterized by long-term “partner involvement based on active professional learning”, where the “partnerships are embedded in the ongoing structures and practices of the institutions”, and where “partners take joint responsibility for mutually agreed practices and outcomes that are embedded in their respective core outcomes” (p. 116).

Figure 11.1 provides a visual overview of the aspects of collaboration in ProTed’s transformative model for partnerships with university schools regarding collaboration on the management, development, and implementation of TE, both in schools and on campus and for R&D in schools.

In the following, we explain and elaborate on Figure 11.1 by presenting a few examples of collaboration approaches. The description of the model has a special focus on collaboration regarding the management, development, and implementation of TE programs and collaboration on R&D projects.

Collaboration on the management of teacher education programs

The establishment of partnerships with university schools involves fixed structures for collaboration with the administration and leadership of TE. For example, at UiO, the university schools are represented in the department board and program board for the five-year integrated TE. They are also involved in various development projects by participating in temporary

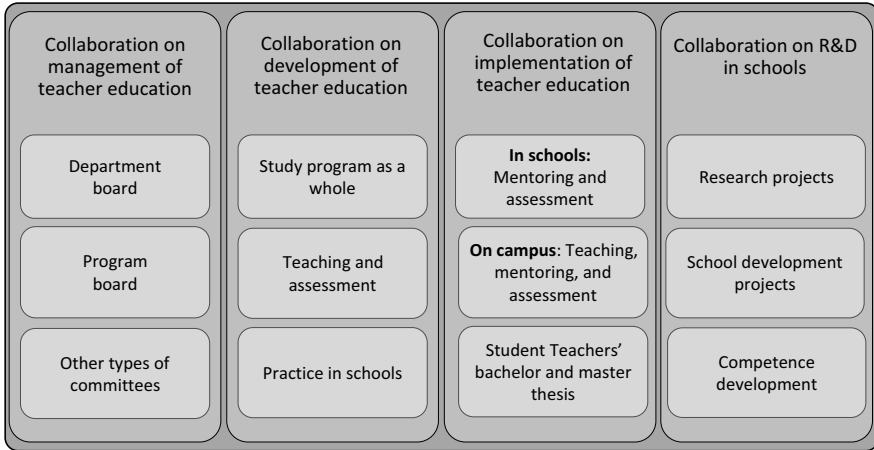


Figure 11.1 Overview of various aspects of collaboration in ProTed’s model for transformative partnerships with university schools.

committees established in connection with the development and revision of the five-year integrated TE program as a whole, in addition to course plans, forms of teaching and assessment, and new forms of practice in schools. In these arenas, representatives of the university schools, student teachers, and members of the TE institution can discuss and provide recommendations about measures for further development of the TE.

Three joint-management initiatives have been co-created at UiT in conjunction with developing the “university school” concept. The first is the Principals’ Forum, where the principals at each university school and the university’s manager of the university school project meet several times each semester, often inviting staff from either the schools or the university. The second is the practicum teams at each school, where practicum teachers, school leadership, and the university’s manager of the university school project meet regularly to prepare for the students’ placement periods, to develop the receiving facilities, to plan the students’ participation in the school, and to give teachers the opportunity to share experiences related to supervising student teachers. Third, long-term collaboration between the school owners (generally Norwegian municipalities) and UiT’s Department of Teacher Education has resulted in joint-management meetings once every semester to plan and continue to develop substantive collaboration on TE and educational research. These collaborations have been influential at the national level and are important to be continuously developed, both for the potential to improve TE and for the chance to implement R&D efforts in schools.

In sum, these management initiatives show how key personnel involved appear across the university and school arena to engage in the operations and development elements in the TE programs that are conducted both in schools and at the university campus. In this way, different people involved in TE can

contribute to “quality work” (Elken & Stensaker, 2018; see also Chapter 2) in different arenas of TE where strategically important decisions are made. Our experience also indicates that coordinating work with researchers and classroom teachers is important, with student teachers also benefiting from this arrangement. Having a designated position for coordinated work with university schools is thus essential for success. This designated position should be held by an administrative employee who knows TE well and who is responsible for coordinating everything that takes place in the collaboration, such as contact with schools, student teachers, and teacher educators.

Another important factor is for many (preferably most) teacher educators at the university to see the benefit of and engage in collaboration with schools. A designated academic leader of the transformative partnership can contribute by conducting research on the collaborations within the partnership and by providing advice to the TE management. Such advice might include which challenges in TE should be prioritized for R&D work in collaboration with university schools. The purpose of the transformative partnerships with university schools (and their activities) also needs to be incorporated into management’s priorities; in this way, the collaboration will be a comprehensive initiative and not just something a few teacher educators at the university have seen the benefit of and are conducting.

Collaboration on the development and implementation of teacher education programs

Representatives from university schools may contribute to making TE programs professionally relevant by taking an active and important role in developing and implementing integrated TE programs. At both UiO and UiT, representatives from university schools have played an important role in the current design of TE programs (described in Chapters 3 and 5), in the development of professional study courses (Chapter 4), and in profession-specific mentoring programs (Chapter 13). At UiO, experienced practicing schoolteachers who have undergone mentoring education and are employed at university schools also have a central function as seminar leaders in the third semester of the teacher program at UiO (see Chapter 3, Figure 3.4). The seminar leaders are hybrid educators who build bridges in TE (Risan, 2022) and may be described as the extended arm of the school into campus, as well as the extended arm of on-campus teaching programs in schools. For the student teachers, this setup means that the seminar teaching becomes relevant to practice, both by the seminar leaders being active teachers who can use examples from their own teaching to actualize the syllabi, and by seminar leaders having close knowledge of parts of the students’ experiences from practice in schools (Hatlevik, Hunskaar, & Eriksen, 2020b).

In collaboration with university schools, UiO has also developed and piloted practice cards in 2022 that specify what should be the focus of the learning process in the various practical training courses. The practice cards

provide a description of assorted topics and activities that students are expected to gain experience with during each practice period in school. The aim of the practice cards is to facilitate a better understanding between schools and the university of what practice should contain in the various phases of the student teachers' learning courses. Research is ongoing on mentors, as well as student teachers' experiences with their usage.

At UiT, representatives of university schools have participated in the development of new forms of student teachers' practice courses in schools, procedural and action-oriented bachelor's theses, the initial master "gathering" where student teachers meet with school representatives to discuss and choose topics for their master's theses, and the final master's conference, where student teachers present their master's theses to the public. The "Focus-Child Project" at UiT is another example of how cooperation with university schools has contributed to strengthening student teachers' learning by creating a new model for combining experience-based knowledge from practical training with the pedagogical theory taught at the university. The purpose of the project was to develop stronger connections between theory and practice and to strengthen the role of practical training in TE (Klemp & Nedberg, 2016). The project was carried out in the second year of the TE program. Each student teacher followed a chosen pupil (focus-child) in school during their practice periods. The close observation of the pupil in different situations was the preparation for a formal written assignment where the student teacher discussed the child's competence and development within different developmental areas. While the project was initially developed by the teacher educators at the university, it was carried out, evaluated, and further developed in cooperation with the school-based mentors and the student teachers through "dialogue seminars" with all three parties, a "dialogue café" with the student teachers after each practice period, various evaluation meetings, and written evaluations.

In the following, we exemplify how collaborations between representatives from university schools have helped to develop and implement dialogue seminars, which have contributed to the appearance of a "third space" (Daza et al., 2021).

Dialogue seminar

Inspired by the idea of the third space (Zeichner, 2010), UiT developed dialogue seminars in collaboration with university schools. Dialogue seminars (Rørnes, 2013; Steele & Danielsen, 2014) are pedagogical meeting places among three parties: student teachers, school-based mentors (schoolteachers with mentoring responsibilities), and university teacher educators (academic staff with teaching responsibilities). These seminars are important collaborative tools that have joined efforts between the university and partner schools when piloting the five-year master's programs for TE at UiT, where relevant topics have been discussed by means of lectures, practice narratives, and group

dialogues (Vedeler, 2013, p. 18). Dialogue seminars, first established in the third year of the TE programs for primary- and lower-secondary schools, were initially allocated for mentors, university teacher educators, and student teachers to follow up on the student teachers' progress with their bachelor's thesis (Steele & Danielsen, 2014).

Together with university schools, UiO has adapted and incorporated dialogue seminars in the sixth semester, midway through a four-week continuous practice period in the integrated TE program for teaching in secondary schools. In this version of the dialogue seminar, student teachers are divided into groups of 4–6 student teachers, a school-based mentor, and a university teacher educator. The student teachers, in turn, present a case from practice about a situation they find particularly challenging, such that others in the group may provide feedback (Hatlevik, Hunnskaar, & Eriksen, 2020b). This form of dialogue can be described as a “transformative learning activity” (Mezirow, 2009) that provides the opportunity for critical reflection on practice; during such sessions, students can discuss specific challenges they experience using practical knowledge, theoretical perspectives, and previous research findings. The aim of transformative learning activities is to give student teachers a new and deeper understanding of various phenomena by looking at them from different angles, using both practical and scientific knowledge (see Chapter 9).

Collaboration on research and development

Collaboration on R&D projects within partnerships with university schools may take several forms and can contribute to innovative practices. One way is to offer joint R&D projects between several schools and the TE institution. Such projects can feature elements of professional development and guidance related to specific topics based on an analysis of developmental areas that university schools have reported as being particularly interesting for the individual school. At UiT, starting in 2014, a PhD candidate examined joint mentoring practices between university- and school-based teachers, concentrating on those student teachers' bachelor's projects where the intention was to establish tripartite collaborative research projects (Steele, 2018a).

Examples of completed joint projects at UiO include “Do You Want to Develop Your Mathematics Teaching?” (Hunnskaar & Borge, 2015) and “Lesson Study as a Method of Professional Development” (Eriksen, 2016), both inspired by action learning. Another way of facilitating collaboration on R&D work involves the announcement of seed funding once a year, with the aim of encouraging schools and scientific staff at the TE institution to collaborate on developing ideas for R&D projects with schools. The criteria for receiving seed funding are that the R&D project must be relevant to TE and support the development of schools and the university school partnership. For university teacher educators, the seed announcements provide the opportunity to receive funding to prepare larger project applications and to

establish meeting places with university schools in order to plan collaborative projects. Several of the seed projects have become an arena for the development of master's projects for student teachers (Hatlevik, Hunskaar, & Eriksen, 2020b).

In the following, we exemplify collaboration on R&D work by presenting two cases: R&D circles and the dialogue café.

Research and development (R&D) circles

R&D circles connect teachers' development work and student teachers' master's assignments. They involve both an institutionalized collaboration between campus and school on R&D work, which represents a new practice form for the ninth semester of the TE related to the master's thesis at UiO. R&D circles typically have 10–12 participants consisting of 1–2 teacher educators at the university, 2–3 student teachers in their ninth semester who will collect data for their master's theses, and 6–8 schoolteachers at university schools. The activities in an R&D circle recognize that teachers in schools, researchers on campus, and student teachers all have varying needs yet are able to contribute to the R&D circle with their specific expertise.

An R&D circle lasts one year and consists of three phases. The first phase consists of knowledge gathering, with participants meeting 5–6 times to read and discuss research literature on a predetermined topic. The second phase includes 2–3 meetings and involves developmental work in which the R&D circle's knowledge is converted into concrete ideas for teaching sequences. The planned teaching is implemented in the third phase, where the master's students carry out research projects on the implementation. After implementation, the participants engage in joint reflection on their experiences from the implementation project. Ongoing research into the participants' experience with the initial implementation of an R&D circle in 2021–2022 on the topic “Power and Sustainability” has provided encouraging results for this type of collaboration. In the future, R&D circles are planned with other topics such as “Democratic Preparedness Against Racism and Antisemitism,” “Multilingualism, Citizenship, and Democracy,” and “Sustainability and Local Ecosystems.”

Dialogue café

The dialogue café is an innovative method of dialogic research that allows for the involvement of large groups of participants in exploratory conversations in order to uncover and verify the phenomenon being studied (Löhr et al., 2020). This method, also called the “world café” (Brown, 2010), is conducted through seven principles:

1. clarify the theme and context
2. create a hospitable and safe environment

3. explore issues that are important to the participants
4. encourage sharing and involvement
5. connect different perspectives
6. listen together to create insight, and
7. share collective findings.

Vedeler (2022) used the dialogue café as a research method as part of a PhD project at UiT, with six schools engaged to explore, unfold, and discuss the practice of school–home collaboration in upper-secondary school. The aim of the partnership effort between the university and schools was to facilitate dialogues of discovery and to create a democratic ethos for a deeper dive into understanding real school-life experiences (Vedeler & Reimer, 2023). Four dialogue cafés were held during the project. Three cafés involved participants from upper-secondary schools, and one involved former students from the participating schools. The dialogic data material was recorded, analyzed, and followed by literature studies to better understand and justify school–home collaboration as a practice in upper-secondary school (Vedeler, 2022). In this way, by including various stakeholders’ experiences and reflections in theorizing work, and by challenging established theory, the concept of “collaborative autonomy support” was developed and introduced as a core purpose of conducting school–home collaboration in upper-secondary school. Due to the dialogic and theorizing approaches used in this project, its innovations were both methodological and theoretical in nature.

Concluding remarks

ProTed’s model for transformative partnership with university schools and examples from the innovations derived from the collaboration show that university schools can contribute to “quality work” in teacher education related to the management, development, and implementation of TE. In addition, collaboration can help to promote practice-relevant R&D in schools. These aspects of the collaboration process are part of a mutually influential relationship and mean that the participation of schools is not reduced to individual contributions; instead, systematic and targeted collaboration promotes quality in TE and in schools. The premise for establishing transformative partnerships is that the TE institution and schools consider each other to be important contributors to TE and school development (respectively), in that they represent different but complementary knowledge. Common features of the various collaborations include using a dialogic approach, having a desire to create coherence between theory and practice, and using relational support in professional development and research. In addition, a stated aim is that knowledge acquired through transformative partnerships with university schools should be continuously disseminated to other partner schools.

Acknowledgments

The examples of collaborative projects described in this chapter are far from exhaustive in showing all the work that has been done in these partnerships. The development of a transformative partnership between universities, schools, and school owners is only possible with the contribution, involvement, enthusiasm, and dedicated efforts of several different individual people and groups. We would like to thank all teachers, school owners, student teachers, and academic and administrative staff in the teacher education programs for their involvement.

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