



# **Spaces of Joint Reflection in Teacher Education: Connecting University and School**

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# Theoretical framework

- ✓ Reflection plays a key role in developing teachers' knowledge and is an important competence for student teachers to acquire  
(Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983; Griffiths, 2000; Grossman, 2010; Postholm, 2010)
- ✓ We define “reflection” as a thinking process which gives coherence to a situation which is initially incoherent and unclear  
(Dewey, 1933, 1938; Schön, 1983)

# Theoretical framework

- ✓ “Productive reflection”:
  - Is interpretation-oriented
  - Allows a more complex, holistic and systemic view of educational practice and situations
  - Considers the dilemmatic nature of educational practice and situations
  - Is informed by academic knowledge

(Clandinin, 1986; Davis, 2006; Dewey, 1933, 1938; Mauri, Clarà, Colomina, Onrubia, & Ginesta, 2013; Moore-Russo. & Wilsey, 2014; Pareja-Roblin & Margalef, 2013; Postholm, 2008)

# Theoretical framework

- ✓ Previous research states that:
  - (Productive) reflection is difficult to attain  
(Gelfuso & Dennis, 2014; Husu, Toom, & Patrikainen, 2008, Mena, Sanchez, & Tillema, 2011)
  - Two important difficulties come from:
    - Disconnection between schools and universities when preparing new teachers  
(Mtika, Robson, & Fitzpatrick, 2014; Zeichner, 2010)
    - Separation and hierarchy between “professional” and “academic” knowledge  
(Clandinin, 1986; Khortagen, 2001; Orland-Barak, & Yinon, 2007)

# Theoretical framework

- ✓ To confront this difficulties, we designed and developed different “spaces” of joint reflection along the students field experience (practicum):
  - Focused on concrete situations of teaching practice
  - Both at the school and at the university
  - Involving the students, their mentor teachers and their university tutors
  - Aimed to develop professional and academic knowledge and to articulate both of them

# Theoretical framework

- ✓ Concretely, three spaces of joint reflection were designed and carried out:
  - “School space”: each student teacher and his/her mentor teacher; at the school
  - “University space”: a group of student teachers and their university tutor; at the university
  - “Shared space”: practicum students at the same school, their mentor teachers and their university tutor/s; at the school

# Research questions

- ✓ Which interactional dynamics are generated in these three spaces of joint reflection?
- ✓ Do these spaces contribute to enhance connection and articulation between school and university, and between professional and academic knowledge, throughout the students' field experience?

# Method

- ✓ Participants and situations observed:
  - 9 student teachers, 9 mentor teachers from 3 schools, and the university tutor
  - Student teachers were taking *Practicum 1* (1<sup>st</sup> practicum period, 4 weeks, 4 whole days/week at school, 1 tutorial meeting/week, 2<sup>nd</sup> training year of 4)
  - Schools and mentor teachers volunteered for the project
  - The university tutor was experienced and member of the research team



# Method

## ✓ Participants and situations observed:

	<i>Where</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Sessions</i>
“School space”	School	Student teacher/mentor school teacher	Joint reflection on “remarkable” or “interesting” situations from their own field experience, proposed by the teacher students	One session per week/pair Timetable jointly decided by the student teacher and the mentor	Average 30 m.	3 per pair (Total: 27)
“University space”	University	All the 9 students and the university tutor		One session per week Part of the scheduled weekly tutorial meeting	Average 1 h.	4
“Shared space”	School	All the 3 students in the same school, their 3 mentor teachers and the university tutor		Two sessions per school - beginning/end of the practicum period Timetable jointly decided by the mentor teachers, the school and the university tutor, and agreed with the students	Average 1 h. 30 m.	2 per school (Total: 6)

# Method

## ✓ Data collection instruments:

- Initial questionnaire with the 9 student teachers and initial individual interview with the 9 mentor school teachers and the university tutor
- Students' field notes of the “school space” sessions
- Videotapes of all the “university space” and “shared space” sessions
- Final individual interviews with the 9 student teachers, the 9 mentor school teachers and the university tutor

# Method

- ✓ Data analysis:
  - Qualitative content analysis
  - General dimensions of analysis:
    - Conditions and dynamics of each joint reflection space
    - Participants' satisfaction
    - Perception of learning
    - Contribution to improve connection between school and university
    - Sustainability

# Results

- ✓ The three proposed spaces of joint reflection were systematically carried out, and all the participants considered them “sustainable”
- ✓ Different joint reflection spaces showed different interaction dynamics
- ✓ The “shared space” appeared as the most complex and difficult to manage
- ✓ There were differences among schools on the dynamics of the “shared space”
- ✓ For all of the spaces, it was not easy to keep reflection focused on interpretation



# Results

- ✓ All the participants were very satisfied with the experience and perceived the spaces as “learning spaces”
- ✓ The spaces were perceived as contributing to a better connection and articulation between school and university
- ✓ The “shared space” seemed crucial for this articulation, but all three spaces seemed relevant, each one contributing in a particular manner
- ✓ Nevertheless, a gap between professional and academic knowledge still remained



# Conclusions

- ✓ The spaces seem to be useful to transform a “two-separate-worlds” perception of school and university into a “joint venture” perception; this could be a first step to a “field experience school-university learning community”
- ✓ The gap between professional and academic knowledge still stands; a common design of the spaces themselves could be useful to fill this gap, by supporting the construction of a common vision of students’ field experience



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# **Thank you very much!**

# Results

1. Interactional dynamics of the joint reflection spaces -- “School space”:
  - All the student teacher/mentor teacher pairs carried out the space systematically and generally according to the proposed guidelines
  - Situations proposed for joint reflection typically refer to: response to children with special educational needs or behavior problems, copying with diversity, the role of the student teacher, the rationale for particular teacher actions



# Results

1. Interactional dynamics of the joint reflection spaces -- “School space”:
  - Discussions were described by both students and mentor teachers as “dialogical” and “balanced”
  - A typical interaction pattern was “S presents the selected situation → T ask questions → T provides information and explanation → S and T discuss”
  - Main roles of the mentor teachers were to “provide their experience, knowledge and information”, to “explain/argue” their actions, and to “support” the reflection process

# Results

1. Interactional dynamics of the joint reflection spaces -- “University space”:
  - The space was carried out systematically and generally according to the proposed guidelines
  - Situations proposed for joint reflection referred to: response to children with special educational needs or behavior problems, copying with children diversity, teachers teamwork, “general” vs. “specialized” teachers, teacher/parents relationships

# Results

1. Interactional dynamics of the joint reflection spaces -- “University space”:
  - Discussions were described as “dialogical”, but some students and the UT considered them “unbalanced”
  - A typical interaction pattern was “S presents the selected situation → Discussion (UT promotes students’ references to similar situations) → UT synthesizes and asks new questions → Discussion → UT summarizes”
  - UT roles: promoting participation, facilitating dialogue, assisting reflection (asking new questions, challenging students’ claims, pointing to key aspects, summarising)

# Results

1. Interactional dynamics of the joint reflection spaces -- “Shared space”:
  - The space was carried out systematically and generally according to the proposed guidelines
  - Situations proposed for joint reflection referred to: response to children with special educational needs or behavior problems, copying with children diversity, conflicts among children, “general” vs. “specialized” teachers, teacher/parents relationships, students retention
  - Issues varied widely among schools

# Results

1. Interactional dynamics of the joint reflection spaces -- “Shared space”:
  - Discussions were described as “dialogical”, but different participants considered them “unbalanced”
  - Typical interaction patterns varied among schools
  - Mentor teachers roles: providing their experience and knowledge, offering criteria and orientations
  - UT roles: moderating participation, keeping discussion on-focus, promoting in-depth discussion
  - Student teachers roles: proposing the situations, asking questions, listening



# Results

## 2. Contribution to the school-university connection and articulation:

- All the participants claimed that the “shared space” strongly contributed to give coherence to the students’ field experience
- Participants said that, through this shared space, school and university “had more contact”, “listened to each other” “shared ideas and criteria”, “approached”
- Some participants (some students and mentor teachers, and the university tutor) also claimed that the “school” and “university” spaces were useful “to link theory and practice”

# Results

## 2. Contribution to the school-university connection and articulation:

- However, connecting professional and academic knowledge was not easy:
  - Participants reported “coincidences” but also “divergences” between professional (“school”) and academic (“university”) approaches to the situations
  - Both the UT and some mentor teachers said that it was difficult to actually contrast and discuss those approaches, and that divergences tended to be avoided or put-aside, particularly in the “shared space”

# Results

## 2. Contribution to the school-university connection and articulation:

- However, connecting professional and academic knowledge was not easy:
  - Differences in the language used by students, mentors and the UT to describe practice were evident in the interviews
  - The interviews also reflected differences in how the participants conceived the aims of the field experience, and the role of the mentor teachers and the UT
  - A “interpretative-oriented” approach to reflection was difficult to attain for student teachers and mentor teachers



# Results

## 2. Contribution to the school-university connection and articulation:

- Most participants said to be “very satisfied” with the whole experience of the spaces of joint reflection. Satisfaction was similar for the students and the mentor teachers. All the participants said that they would participate in a similar experience for the next practicum periods
- The students said that they “had learned” from the spaces. A wide list of “learned contents” were mentioned, including “learning to reflect” and “to be more reflective”, and “learning to be a teacher”

# Results

## 2. Contribution to the school-university connection and articulation:

- Mentor teachers and the university tutor also said that they had learned themselves from participating in the spaces
- Mentor teachers, in particular, said that they had also learned to reflect
- All the participants said that the effort to participate in the spaces was clearly “sustainable”

