Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Educational Action Research

Connecting Research and Practice for Professionals and Communities

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/reac20

Democratic pedagogies in initial teacher education: co-constructing a supportive learning framework

Susan Raymond, Shaan Gilson & Rohan Ball

To cite this article: Susan Raymond, Shaan Gilson & Rohan Ball (26 Feb 2024): Democratic pedagogies in initial teacher education: co-constructing a supportive learning framework, Educational Action Research, DOI: 10.1080/09650792.2024.2317202

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2024.2317202

View supplementary material

Published online: 26 Feb 2024.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 73

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=reac20

EDUCATIONAL ACTION RESEARCH
https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2024.2317202

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

Democratic pedagogies in initial teacher education: co-constructing a supportive learning framework

Susan Raymond, Shaan Gilson and Rohan Ball

Education Futures, University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia

ABSTRACT

Initial teacher education programs in Australia require all preservice teachers to complete a mandated teaching performance assessment. This places significant performative pressure on preservice teachers undertaking their final teaching placement. This paper reports on an action research project that aimed to co-construct a series of workshops with preservice teachers in a two-year Master of Teaching program to support them in completing the teaching performance assessment. Findings demonstrated that scaffolding and in particular, modelling, collaboration, and dialogue provided the greatest support for PSTs. A Supportive Learning Framework is offered as a model for future practice for initial teacher educators and researchers.

Highlights

- Democratic approaches to teaching in initial teacher education support preservice teachers to successfully achieve learning outcomes;
- Democratic approaches are important to enable the educator to respond reflexively to the learning and teaching process.
- Sharing power with preservice teachers enables co-construction of knowledge to feed forward into their careers;
- A Supportive Learning Framework for Initial Teacher Education is an ecological approach to supporting preservice and graduate teachers.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 17 August 2022
Accepted 15 August 2023

KEYWORDS
Democratic pedagogies; initial teacher education; action research; insider's perspective; supportive learning framework

Introduction

This paper reports on an action research project that utilised democratic pedagogies to co-design with preservice teachers (PSTs), a series of workshops to support them in completing a mandated assessment task as part of their two-year Master of Teaching program. In initial teacher education (ITE), PSTs are uniquely positioned to provide both an insider's perspective as learners and an outsider's perspective as teachers. They step into and out of these roles through their teaching placement experiences, creating a significant opportunity to explore a framework that supports PSTs to interrogate their role as both learners and teachers. This paper argues that democratic pedagogies are necessary in co-creating a supportive learning framework that PSTs can carry forward into

CONTACT Shaan Gilson shaan.gilson@unisa.edu.au
Supplemental data for this article can be accessed online at https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2024.2317202.
© 2024 Educational Action Research

their teaching careers. Such an approach challenges the existing power structures and dominant discourses in education (Delpit 1995), by inviting PSTs to be active participants in their own learning (Harris, Carrington, and Ainscow 2018).

The researchers, who were also ITE educators, sought to engage with PST voices to support them in achieving the learning outcomes of two final-year capstone courses of the Master of Teaching program. As an ITE program, the capstone courses shared a nationally mandated assessment, the Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA). The TPA significantly shaped the content of the courses and imposed assessments on the PSTs. The educators questioned how to support and respond to the needs of the PSTs whilst also maintaining their agency in responding to the macrosystem assessment requirement.

An action research project was designed to overcome the tension the TPA created within the educator's practice. This study explored the role of democratic pedagogies to co-construct a teaching and learning framework to enable the PSTs to successfully meet the learning outcomes of the TPA. The paper begins with a brief overview of the background literature, followed by the methods and methodology of the action research process. Next the findings of the study are presented and highlight the pedagogical interventions that took place throughout the workshops and the key pedagogies that supported the PSTs learning. The paper concludes with a discussion of the key interpretations of the study and potential implications for future research and practice, including a proposed model for a supportive learning framework in ITE.

Background

Democratic pedagogies, enable educators to share power with PSTs and re-define the role of as a facilitator of learning, willing to co-construct new understandings with PSTs. Democratic pedagogy for this research, differs from a completely student-centred approach, as the role of the educator is highly prevalent (Harwood 2001). The reflexive role is adopted by educators, to encourage PST voice in shaping the teaching and learning experiences (Harwood 2001). The review of the literature provides a critique of democratic pedagogies and the role of action research in supporting PSTs to co-construct a supportive learning environment.

Democratic pedagogy

Democratic pedagogy utilises a collaborative approach in exploring the mutual interests of the learning community but is guided by the constraints of formalised assessment requirements (Burgh 2014). A democratic approach to teaching and learning recognises knowledge and understanding as a social exchange between the educator and the learner (Freire and Shor 1987). A democratic approach facilitates deep learning where the educator provides opportunities for students to explore their understandings, utilising their existing knowledge and exploring ideas and concepts to come to new understandings (Biggs and Tang 2011). Collaboration, scaffolding and dialogic exchange are crucial practices educators implement to access the PSTs' funds of knowledge and scaffold learning. These approaches establish a democratic approach to teaching and learning (Burgh 2014; McMath 2008). This democratic approach not only provides the

learner with an environment of open dialogue, but the opportunity for the educator to evaluate the effectiveness of their own teaching through feedback in real time (Dangel, Guyton, and McIntyre 2004).

A democratic teaching and learning environment enable dialogue between learners and between learners and educators, to explore understandings and exchange ideas (Skidmore and Murakami 2016). The opportunity for a wide range of perspectives and experiences through active learning is promoted as PSTs apply and theorise their understandings (Biggs and Tang 2011). Dialogue also enables the sharing of power and clarity of outcomes with the learner and the gradual release of responsibility (Biggs and Tang 2011; Chuang, Kee, and Chen 2022), from the educator to the PST.

Dialogic pedagogies are, therefore, a key element of a democratic approach, as they support the PST to explore their own position and perceptions, while being receptive to peer views with a willingness to revise their position to align to learning outcomes (Teo 2019). The educator becomes a facilitator of learning, scaffolding the learning from what is already known and co-creating new understandings and knowledge with the learner (Hammond and Gibbons 2005). By questioning the effectiveness of the teaching approaches with PSTs through dialogic exchange, the educator elicits pedagogical strategies that suit each learner. The educator can provide specific scaffolding, such as modelling, provocations, questions and scenario-based learning, incorporating a continually measured level of challenge to extend learning and enable learner autonomy (Hammond and Gibbons 2005; Mariani 1997). This process enables educators to establish a systematic approach to link PST voice with cyclic reflection of their own practice (Ewing et al. 2020). By modelling action research procedures to PSTs as part of explicit teaching, educators can address the call to practice pedagogy that becomes a lived experience for PSTs that they can carry forward into their careers (Draper et al. 2011).

Action research

Action Research enables educators to study their practice with the aim to change three areas; 'practices, their understanding of their practices, and the conditions in which they practise' (Kemmis 2009, 463). Action research creates a 'praxis' where these three areas come together through examination and self-study, enabling critical reflection on the educator's own practice and questioning the validity and effectiveness of it (Robbins 2020).

In ITE there is an established teaching framework in terms of knowledge dissemination and challenges between providing a range of understandings and aligning with highly regulated systems (Brooks 2021). According to Seal and Mayo (2021) higher education knowledge aims to enable the student to acquire, generate and assimilate knowledge, as well as adhere to macrosystem government requirements such as the TPA. By incorporating an action research model using the cyclical process of starting with a problem or a question and concluding with the application of knowledge (Efron and Ravid 2019), educators can examine their own practice in the context of their teaching (Nichols and Cormack 2017). Action research (Kemmis 2009) ensures the voice of the PST is considered and there is a reciprocal exchange and consideration between the educator and the PST (Kemmis 2009).

Such a democratic approach with a strong emphasis on listening to PSTs, challenges the traditional paradigm of higher education, with educators and PSTs becoming partners in learning (Smith and Seal 2021). Careful examination of practice through action research

ensures educators are authentic in the democratic implementation of their pedagogy. Accountability is built into the process through the cycle of feedback and reflection aligned to the inquiry process (Efron and Ravid 2019). Furthermore, accountability is demonstrated through changes to the educators' practice, aligned to the feedback of the PSTs.

In utilising democratic pedagogies, it is also important that the PSTs are participants in the research. Action Research supports the sharing of power and the opportunity for PSTs to be part of the process of 'practice changing practice' (Kemmis 2009, 464). In engaging with democratic pedagogies PSTs are provided with the opportunity to become agents in their learning and in turn, are empowered to enact change and embed democratic pedagogy in their own teaching (Smith and Seal 2021).

Through modelling of the action research process PSTs see how change can be enacted through the continuous cycle**s** of inquiry into practice (MacDonald and Weller 2017). Incorporating democratic pedagogies, which integrate a dialogic focus, allows for PST 'voice' and 'choice' to articulate what will support their understanding and provide an environment for PSTs to learn and grow (Morrison 2008). The methodology of this study demonstrates the power of educators sharing the construction of knowledge with PSTs and making transparent their own journey of action research as part of this process.

Methodology

This paper reports on an action research project that took place throughout June 2021, in two, co-requisite, final year courses of the Master of Teaching program. Within the Master of Teaching program, PSTs must undertake two university -based courses which support them to successfully complete two assessed teaching placements. The action research project took place within the second of these courses, which was mid-year of the second year of the Master of Teaching program. Within the second teaching placement, PSTs complete the TPA as the final assessment for the course. PSTs are supported to do this through the Curriculum Specialisation course which provides action research training and support for PSTs to develop a practitioner inquiry project of their own. PSTs have previously found this aspect of the final teaching placement challenging, requiring significant support at the end of their placement to pass this assessment task. The action research project was therefore, designed to address the PSTs' concerns. Democratic pedagogies were utilised to co-design with PTS and the educators a series of 12, three-hour workshops so that PSTs were supported to achieve the outcomes of the mandated TPA as part of their ITE program completion.

Research aim and question

The aim of the research was to explore how the co-construction of a series of workshops could support PSTs to successfully meet the learning outcomes of the TPA. The study sought to address the following research question:

> What types of democratic pedagogical approaches support PSTs to achieve the learning outcomes of the TPA?

Participants

The participants were twenty-five final year PSTs enrolled in the two capstone courses of the Master of Teaching program. There were nine male and sixteen female participants. All participants undertook their final teaching placement in a primary school context. The researchers were the educators for the workshops prior to the teaching placement and were registered teachers with a combined 20 years' ITE experience. The researchers were also considered to be participants as teaching and learning was co-designed with the preservice teachers. Through democratic pedagogy the educators positioned themselves as both educators and learners alongside the PSTs. This afforded the educators the opportunity to make space for dialogue, enabling them to learn with and from the PSTs.

Data collection

An action research methodology was utilised as a meta-practice whereby practices shaped the ongoing practices of the educators and PSTs (Kemmis and Grootenboer 2008). This stance enabled the educators, as participants and researchers, to be reflexive and responsive to the views and needs of the PSTs (Kemmis 2009). Data collection was, therefore, diverse and cyclical to inform the co-design of the 12 workshops and teaching and learning experiences. Data consisted of two student questionnaires, student feedback from each university-based workshop and both educators kept a reflexive journal which was completed after each workshop.

In workshop one, the PSTs were invited to complete a questionnaire to ascertain their prior knowledge about the practitioner inquiry process required for the TPA and determine the supportive scaffolds they considered to be the least to the most supportive and why. PSTs were provided with a list of scaffolds and asked to order and provide a rationale for their selections. Scaffolds listed included providing time in the workshop to meet individually with their educator, working collaboratively in groups with their peers, providing independent work time for the TPA etc. A free response section was also included to enable PSTs to provide additional information they felt could support their learning in the workshops. This information was collated and utilised to inform the educator's planning and pedagogy for the second workshop.

At the conclusion of each workshop PST feedback was sought to examine which scaffolds the PSTs found supportive and ideas for further scaffolds. A variety of methods were utilised to elicit the PSTs feedback and included 'three stars and a wish' that asked the PSTs to document three strategies that worked well and something that they wished we had included. Other strategies used online tools such as Mentimeter to ask the PSTs about how the scaffolds supported their learning within the workshop. Time was also spent co-designing with the PSTs, an outline for the next workshop.

The PSTs' feedback was collated and reviewed at the end of each workshop to further inform the outline for the next workshop and pedagogical strategies. This enabled the educators to analyse whether the PSTs were achieving the aim of the research project i.e. whether the co-construction of the workshops was supporting the PSTs to successfully meet the learning outcomes of the TPA.

A summary of the PSTs' feedback and outline for the workshops was provided at the beginning of each workshop. The educators explicitly highlighted how they

had adjusted their practice to incorporate the PSTs' feedback, with the aim of further support their learning to achieve the outcomes of the TPA. Figures 1 and 2 are examples of the ITE educator responses to the PSTs feedback from workshop two.

PSTs were asked to provide feedback on the educators' practice at the end of each workshop to inform the next workshop. An example from workshop three is provided below in Figure 3, whereby the PSTs were asked to self-reflect on their role in the teaching and learning process.

In workshop 12, the questionnaire from workshop one was repeated to ascertain what types of democratic pedagogical approaches used in the co-construction of the workshops, supported the PSTs to achieve the learning outcomes of the TPA. A free response section was provided to enable the educators to elicit from PSTs' possibilities for further implementation with future cohorts.

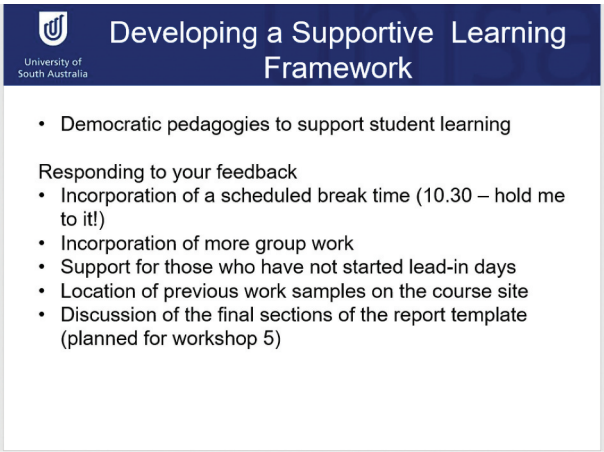

Figure 1. Response to PST feedback: three stars and a wish.

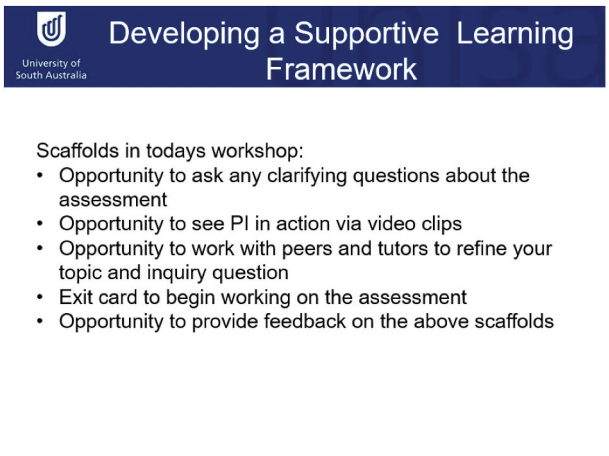

Figure 2. Outline of scaffolds in workshop 2.

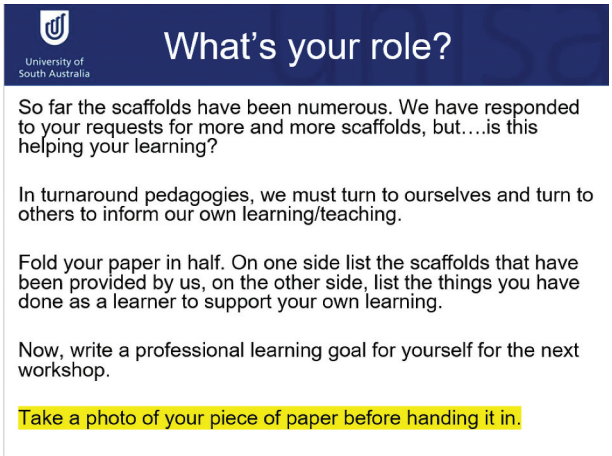

Figure 3. Eliciting feedback from PSTs in workshop 3.

Data analysis

Data analysis took place after each workshop and included both PST perspectives of the teaching and learning process from the feedback elicited (Hattam 2021), and educator perspectives, through a reflexive journal (Hattam 2021). Documentation of what occurred within the teaching and learning process was also supported through teaching observation and follow-up discussion with two critical friends (Hattam 2021). Curriculum plans were re-visited following the reflection on PST feedback, discussion with critical friends and writing in the reflexive journal. Workshop slides were then developed with specific pedagogical strategies in mind to scaffold the PSTs to meet the learning outcomes of the TPA. PST work samples (Hattam 2021) were also collected in workshop 12 to inform the development of the Supportive Learning Framework for ITE detailed in the discussion section.

A more in-depth analysis took place once the 12 workshops had concluded. Analysis used inductive and deductive approaches with theoretically driven coding (King 2004) to analyse the data gathered throughout the action research process in relation to the democratic approaches used to co-design the workshops with the PSTs. Analysis involved the re-reading of the data (student questionnaires, student feedback and the researchers' reflexive journal) and focused on statements that the PSTs made about how their learning was being supported through the ITE educators' pedagogical approaches. Initial memos were used to develop more specific themes applying understandings of democratic pedagogies. Table 1 provides an example of memos created from feedback gathered at the end of workshop two to inform workshop three.[1]

Topic codes were applied to examine similarities and differences across the data (Creswell 2007). Utilising the example provided in Table 1, *questioning, feedback, listening* and *modelling* were identified as topic codes. Data from workshops one to six were re-visited and analysed using these topic codes to enable interpretations relevant to the research questions to emerge and for greater transparency of the analytic process (Storey 2007). A definition of democratic pedagogies was used to guide the analytic process (Creswell 2007):

Table 1. Memos from data analysis of feedback from workshop 2. (An excerpt has been provided here without the colour coding. For the full analysis, refer to the supplemental material).

Tutor scaffolds	Self-regulated learning	Learning goals
Working on assessment in class – Exit card	Seeking out tutor support – Asking questions Memo: Explicit link to dialogic process to support learning – questioning (Tutor)	Revisit and complete sections of the assessment template – Select case studies – Clarify sub-questions – Create a timeline and checklist to complete the assessment
Inquiry examples – Reports – Questions	Sourcing literature	Liaise with the supervising teacher Memo: Explicit link to dialogic process to support learning (Supervising Teacher)
Explicit teaching of inquiry components – Workshop content	Working independently to complete the assessment – Taking responsibility for learning – Utilising time – Rearranging commitments – Making lists	Locate literature
Setting expectations for learning – Checklists – Template – Assessment handbook – Personal goal setting – Prep tasks	Completing the workshop prep tasks	Bring questions to class Memo: Explicit link to dialogic process to support learning (Tutor or Peers?)

Codes.
Yellow – questioning Green – tutor feedback Grey – tutor modelling.
Pink – external support (ST, SC & site Colleagues) Aqua – collaborative work with peers.

> Democratic pedagogies - utilises a collaborative approach in exploring the mutual interests of the learning community (Burgh 2014). *Collaboration, scaffolding and dialogic exchange* are crucial exponents of democratic pedagogies. (Burgh 2014; McMath 2008)

The extract in Table 2 illustrates the more specific use of theory to analyse the feedback at the end of workshop four. The PSTs were asked about the usefulness of the scaffolds in workshops one to four. The data analysis utilised the analytic codes of democratic pedagogies - *Collaboration, scaffolding and dialogic exchange*, to examine the data:

Table 2. Extracts of analytic coding: identifying the initial themes (An sample extract is included below. For the full sample, please refer to the supplemental material).

Code	PST comment	Memo
Collaboration	• Working in groups to identify the main take-away points of another teachers' practice • Small group work • Collaborating with peers to ask/answer questions and develop ideas • I found the scaffold of providing time for peer support whilst independently writing our inquiry proposal gave time and feedback to support my understanding of what I writing • Collaborative work with peers who have the same year level allowed idea sharing	Working with small groups enabled PSTs to ask questions, seek out feedback and test out new ideas. Collaboration enabled dialogic encounters to occur and scaffolded learning. Collaboration underpins democratic pedagogies. Without this element dialogic encounters cannot occur. Collaboration with peers and tutor provides the scaffolding PSTs require to be successful

Findings

The findings section addresses the research question, which was to explore the types of democratic pedagogical approaches that would support PSTs to achieve the learning outcomes of the TPA. Democratic pedagogy was defined as a collaborative approach to explore the mutual interests of the learning community (Burgh 2014). As such, workshops to support the PSTs to achieve the desired learning outcomes were co-designed by the educators and PSTs. Educators utilised collaboration, scaffolding and dialogic exchange as crucial exponents of democratic pedagogies (Burgh 2014; McMath 2008), inviting PSTs to be active participants in the teaching and learning process (Harris, Carrington, and Ainscow 2018).

Given the cyclical nature of action research, the findings highlight the types of practices the PSTs found most supportive for their learning and demonstrate the key shifts in the educators' pedagogical practice. The process of eliciting feedback and co-designing the workshops was utilised throughout each of the workshops. The PSTs' positionality of being both learners and teachers enabled the teaching and learning process to be interrogated and curriculum planning to be reflexive in responding to the needs of the PSTs. Curriculum plans were refined by the educators after each workshop discussion, once further analysis of the feedback, reflection and discussion between the educators and critical friends, occurred.

Workshop one began with the educators outlining the democratic approach that would be utilised throughout the course. Whilst the topics for workshops had been pre-determined to ensure PSTs were on track to meet the requirements of the TPA, the process and strategies to achieve these outcomes would be co-designed with the PSTs. As workshop one was planned prior to meeting the PSTs, the educators outlined the key pedagogical approaches for the workshop as *explicit instruction, collaborative group work with peers, an individual self-assessment of key concepts that would be presented throughout the course and individual time to work on the assessment*. To guide the educators' practice for future workshops, the PSTs completed a questionnaire. The questionnaire identified four key strategies that they felt would support their learning. These were explicitly linking workshops tasks to the assessment requirements, providing time in workshops to work on TPA assessments, modelling pedagogies and providing workshop preparation tasks that supported the completion of the TPA requirements. Four PSTs offered additional strategies that could be utilised:

- Group or paired work
- Providing examples of assessments
- Having a previous student talk to them about their experience.

At the end of workshop one, the educators and PSTs co-designed the outline for workshops two and three. The educators reflected on the feedback elicited from the PSTs and refined the pedagogical strategies and curriculum plan for workshops two and three. The PSTs highlighted the explicit outline of the assessment requirements and time to work on the assessment in class with the help of peers and educators as highly supportive. The PSTs asked for increased collaboration with peers to brainstorm, discuss and clarify ideas. Adjustments were made to the workshop plans for workshops two and three to ensure the PSTs perspectives about their learning needs were considered in the educators' practice.

Feedback at the end of workshops two and three was collected and analysed to inform teaching and learning experiences for workshops four and five. The PSTs identified *working with peers* as the most supportive strategy, followed by *working with educators*. Collaborative groups were helpful for PSTs to work on their assessment with their peers and enabled them to discuss and clarify ideas. The PSTs suggested that more examples of TPA projects, more time with educators and greater support with locating literature for their project would support their learning.

In the planning for workshops six and seven, which was the mid-point for the course, one PST suggested that setting a personal goal for their own learning would keep them on track towards completing the TPA assessment. This was a significant pedagogical shift for the educators as the PST feedback to that point was outwardly focused, i.e. the PSTs asked for the educators to take on the pedagogical responsibility for their learning. In creating a supportive learning framework there needed to be a bi-directional educator/PST relationship and responsibility for learning. Critically, the educators asked a key question of themselves: *'I am teaching what the PSTs say they need, but are the PSTs learning what they need and seeking out supports or enacting learning strategies for themselves?'* The opportunity for self-reflection was therefore, included in the remaining workshops so that the PSTs assumed a greater role in the learning process. This required the PSTs to step into and out of their roles as both learners and teachers as they began to reflect on working with learners in the classroom context.

Over the remaining workshops, the process of co-designing the teaching and learning experiences, eliciting feedback and analysing the feedback to refine curriculum plans, continued. However, the feedback remained consistent with useful practices identified as discussion with educators and peers, opportunities for feedback on their work and time to work towards the TPA assessment. This prompted the educators to think about a learning framework to enable PSTs to break the larger, complex task of the TPA into more manageable steps. In workshop 12, PSTs were asked to work collaboratively in groups to reflect on the pedagogical strategies utilised throughout the course and develop a framework for a supportive learning environment, which is presented in the discussion section.

Following the conclusion of workshop 12, the educators engaged in a more in-depth data analysis which revealed three types of democratic pedagogies that supported PST learning: *scaffolding*, *collaboration*, and *dialogue*. Significantly, the findings revealed the importance of the educators scaffolding through modelling pedagogies, strategies, and approaches, whilst also facilitating collaboration to clarify understanding.

Across the workshops, scaffolding in the form of modelling was the most supportive democratic approach as noted by PSTs:

> Modelling significantly supported me with my own practitioner inquiry process on placement as I had an experiential point of reference to utilise and guide my own practice.

Deeper examination of the data revealed that three forms of modelling were the most supportive: real-world examples of pedagogies, video and useful handouts and PowerPoint slides. For example, PSTs highlighted that having clear examples of both quality planning documents and poor planning documents significantly supported them in creating their own examples. Educator modelling of pedagogies such as grouping

strategies and brain breaks, were exceptionally supportive to PSTs. Finally, modelling of the practitioner inquiry process also supported PSTs:

> I appreciated that [educator] 'walked the talk' by conducting her own action research during our course. She was able to share some really valuable insights into her approach which brought my own research project to life and helped me understand what the data collection process could look like in my placement classroom.

The opportunity to work collaboratively with peers and educators by participating in group work was also a supportive approach to learning reported by the PSTs. Collaboration enabled the sharing of ideas and to clarify understanding of requirements and concepts. These opportunities assisted PSTs in working through their concerns with input from their peers and to navigate the complex nature of the assessments:

> Group work provided me with the opportunity to gain clear and helpful feedback on the unit plans/lessons plans that I submitted for assessment prior to commencing placement.

> On placement I utilised collaboration as a democratic approach by creating many opportunities for the children to work in pairs or groups. The result was indelibly clear that when the children were able to work together and clarify ideas with one another they created a supportive learning framework for each other that succoured their learning.

Dialogue between the PSTs and educators enabled the co-creation of a supportive learning environment which they could utilise and carry forward into their careers as graduate teachers. Discussion allowed the explanation of assessment tasks, opportunities to ask questions, and to clarify, refine ideas, research questions and topics. PSTs stated that speaking one-to-one with ITE educators was crucial to their understanding the complexities of the practitioner inquiry project for the TPA. This enabled them to develop appropriate research topics and research questions:

> [educator] provided plenty of examples of previous student work and was able to quickly think up relevant examples when trying to illustrate a point or answer a question.

Additionally, PSTs indicated that having whole group discussions about case studies and scenarios relating to behaviour management, planning, readings, and general concerns was also integral to not only their understanding of course material and assessments but to the development of a supportive learning framework.

Discussion

This paper reported on the role of democratic pedagogies in enabling PSTs in their final semester of their Master of Teaching program, to co-construct a supportive learning framework to complete a mandated TPA. The data significantly indicated that a democratic approach that incorporated PST voice had positive learning outcomes for them. PSTs used dialogue to strengthen their understandings and communicate how the educator could frame their pedagogy to best support their learning. This study demonstrates the positive impact on learning that occurs when educators model pedagogy for PSTs and how sharing power can support teaching practice. The data indicated that

democratic approaches, with an array of strategies for classroom teaching, improved PST confidence and competence in their teaching (Nolen and Putten 2007).

Whilst the constraints of the TPA limited the content of the final capstone courses, the pedagogy that educators choose to use within each workshop is within their agency. As such, a democratic approach enabled PSTs to bridge the gap between their own funds of knowledge whilst also negotiating the production of required knowledge for the TPA. By accessing the PSTS' funds of knowledge which they brought from their own lived experience, provided the basis for the democratic framework of learning (Rodriguez 2013) and in turn, success in completing the TPA.

Uniquely, the ITE educators engaged in their own action research project, whilst simultaneously teaching and modelling how to do this for PSTs. In undertaking their own action research within the course, they were able to embed democratic pedagogies consistently, creating room for the co-creation of new understandings and learner autonomy (Hammond and Gibbons 2005). The ITE educators demonstrated that the current power structures within education can be challenged, whilst also supporting learning (Harris, Carrington, and Ainscow 2018). The PSTs were invited to share in the construction of teaching and learning experiences, transforming the power relationship within the ITE classroom.

The utilisation of democratic pedagogies resulted in three main strategies that were viewed by the PSTs as the most supportive: scaffolding, collaboration and dialogue. Of these three, scaffolding was the viewed by the PSTs as the most important strategy to support learning. The data showed that scaffolded modelling was either the second most or most supportive strategy over the course of the five workshops. Three forms of modelling were utilised; providing pertinent examples of pedagogies, strategies, and topics in the form of videos, handouts and PowerPoint slides; the explicit connection of workshop tasks to the Standards (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2009); and modelling of the action research process also supported PSTs.

Scaffolding incorporated modelling of changes to pedagogy implemented through the ITE educator's own action research project. This demonstrated the teaching and learning cycle in real time and highlighted practice changing practice (Kemmis 2009). The PSTs noted the value of modelling the action research process in a practical and experiential way to help mirror the process for them for their final assessment, and to support self -evaluation and progressive learning as graduate teachers (Hyde 2005). The scaffolded approach illustrated for the PSTs how to assimilate knowledge and understanding (Seal and Mayo 2021). The modelled cycle also demonstrated the reflexive nature of teaching (Ewing et al. 2020) and highlighted the way in which PSTs could implement these approaches in their own classrooms as graduate teachers and examine their own practice more critically (Nichols and Cormack 2017).

The educators utilised a range of methods in which our PSTs voices could be heard, such as exit cards, creating learning experiences that encouraged dialogue and eliciting information through surveys, to name a few. Some methods of dialogic pedagogy were not considered helpful for the PST. When dialogue was encouraged in a general class discussion, students found the focus and learning was not targeted. This was not as supportive for learning as PSTs needed more specific direction guiding a discussion to ensure the learning was aligned to their assessments. They also felt the deconstruction of pedagogy by the educator was not helpful as it was too obvious. By engaging in dialogue with students, which Kamler and Comber (2005) suggest supports knowing about the life

worlds of students, the ITE educators were more easily able to access our PSTs' funds of knowledge. They were able to communicate areas they were confident, such as understanding the relevance of pedagogical approaches. Subsequently, the ITE educators were able to incorporate the PSTs' ideas into the workshop material and methods, responding to their needs and suggestions in a balanced and reflexive way (Hattam and Zipin 2009).

Learning experiences and collaboration within the ITE classroom significantly supported the PSTs to implement democratic approaches into their own teaching practice. The significance of developing PTS' pedagogical content knowledge in practice or as Boomer (1989) says, developing the PSTs' 'knowing in practice', also resulted in the gradual release of responsibility from the ITE educator to the PST. PSTs were able to deepen their own understanding of their pedagogy whilst also developing their own professional identity (Chuang, Kee, and Chen 2022; Clarke 2014).

Whilst the PSTs were able to complete their assessments tasks, the democratic approach taken by the ITE educators had a greater intent, which was to equip the PSTs with a framework that they could then use to support the learners who they would teach as they moved forward into their careers. As a part of the final workshop the PSTs were asked to visually conceptualise a supportive learning framework. The resulting model (Figure 2) is a combination of these efforts consisting of a set of nested elements.

A Supportive Learning Framework for ITE is conceptualised as four concentric circles: the learning environment, the educator and PST. In taking an ecological systems approach (Bronfenbrenner 2005) the systems are connected in a bi-directional manner as shown in Figure 4.

In this framework of teaching and learning the student is situated at the centre. The educator is located within the students' microsystem and in interaction with the mesosystem of the learning environment. Learning support is integrated into both the student and the educators experience in a shared relationship where knowledge and understanding can be created.

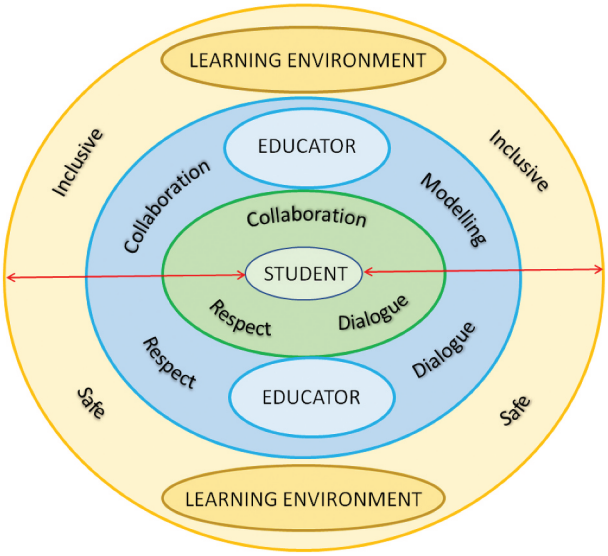

Figure 4. Supportive learning framework for ITE.

Through the learning processes, in a safe and inclusive learning environment, educators can facilitate learning to enable PSTs to interact with the systems to further develop their knowledge. In doing so, ITE educators and PSTs create space for learning. Together the PST and educator can co-create new learning and understandings, which challenge the learners and develop their self-efficacy (Hammond and Gibbons 2005).

The development of the Supportive Learning Framework for ITE is important not only to the ITE learning process but to graduate teachers to use as a model in their own practice in their developing careers (Kamler and Comber 2005). School reform that incorporates greater student voice in shaping teaching and learning (Mayes 2020), empowers learners develops their self-efficacy and prepares them as 21st century learners (Teo 2019). Thus, if student voice is important for school reform, it must also be important to ITE.

The PSTs in this study were able to experience how their voice was valued in shaping teaching and learning experiences. PSTs noted that being involved in the democratic process for their own learning enhanced their capacity to embed this pedagogy into their teaching. Thus, dialogic pedagogy is not just a teaching approach, but underpins an epistemological position of learning as a social construct (Freire and Shor 1987).

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated the role of democratic pedagogies in higher education. ITE educators implemented a practical action research process that modelled for PSTs the role that action research can play in enabling pedagogical agency in a highly regulated education policy field. In doing so the ITE educators strengthened the transition of the PSTs to graduate teachers by creating a supportive learning framework that they can carry forward into their careers.

As evidenced by this study, ITE educators can collaborate and share power with PSTs by facilitating and integrating the voice of the PST. The ITE educators reflexively responded to the PST's voice and incorporated elements of their funds of knowledge. This approach acknowledged the situational interest and needs of the PST without a predetermined agenda for learning (Hidi and Renninger 2006). Thus, the ITE educators moved away from the teacher as expert to teachers as a collaborator in learning (Smith and Seal 2021).

Whilst this study reported on a small cohort of PSTs, utilising a democratic process within two ITE courses, the ITE educators learnt with and from PSTs by collaborating and engaging in dialogue. The proposed Supportive Learning Framework for ITE aims to inspire other ITE educators to dare to position themselves as educators and learners alongside their PSTs. Thus, to replicate this study with a larger cohort of PSTs would add to the trustworthiness of the findings. We, therefore, encourage other ITE educators to challenge the dominant discourses in education and include PSTs as active participants in their own learning (Harris, Carrington, and Ainscow 2018). The proposed Supportive Learning Framework for ITE enables other ITE educators to take up this challenge so that it may feed forward into the careers of graduate teachers and in turn improve the teaching and learning experiences of the children/young people they teach.

Notes

1. The full versions of Tables 1 and 2 can be accessed via the Supplemental tab above the article on the journal's website (https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/reac20/current).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

ORCID

Susan Raymond http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4879-7843
Shaan Gilson http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3243-1716

Ethics Approval

Ethics approval was granted for the study 'Sustaining enabling pedagogies at Education Futures' (protocol number 202,408) through the University of South Australia Human Research Ethics Committee, 2021.

References

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. 2009. "Australian Professional Standards for Teachers." https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/national-policy-framework/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers.pdf.

Biggs, J., and C. Tang. 2011. *Teaching for Quality Learning at University: What the Student Does*. 4th ed. Society for Research into Higher Education: Open University Press.

Boomer, G. 1989. "The Helping Hand Strikes Again?: An Exploration of Language, Learning, and Teaching." *English Education* 21 (3): 132–151.

Bronfenbrenner, U. 2005. *Making Human Beings Human: Bioecological Systems Perspectives on Human Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Brooks, C. 2021. *Initial Teacher Education at Scale: Quality Conundrums*. Routledge.

Burgh, G. 2014. "Democratic Pedagogy." *Journal of Philosophy in Schools* 1 (1). https://doi.org/10.21913/JPS.v1i1.990.

Chuang, K.L., Y.H. Kee, and H.H. Chen. 2022. "Implementation of the Gradual Release of Responsibility Informed Curriculum and Pedagogy for Teaching Programming: Action Research Based on a Course for Sport Science Students." *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education* 30:100367. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2021.100367.

Clarke, S. 2014. "Avoiding the Blank Stare: Teacher Training with the Gradual Release of Responsibility in Mind." *English Teaching Forum* 52 (2): 28–35.

Creswell, J.W. 2007. *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. CA, USA: Sage Publications.

Dangel, J., E. Guyton, and C. McIntyre. 2004. "Constructivist Pedagogy in Primary Classrooms: Learning from Teachers and Their Classrooms." *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education* 24 (4): 237–245. https://doi.org/10.1080/1090102040240404.

Delpit, L. 1995. *Teachers' Voices: Rethinking Teacher Education for Diversity. Other People's Children*. New York: New Press.

Draper, R.J., P. Adair, S. Gray, S. Grierson, S. Hendrickson, AP. Jensen, JD. Nokes, S. Shumway, D. Siebert, and G. Wright. 2011. "Seeking Renewel, Finding Community: Participatory Action Research in Teacher Education." *Teacher Development* 15 (1): 1–18.

Efron, SE., and R. Ravid. 2019. *Action Research in Education : A Practical Guide*. New York: Guilford Publications.

Ewing, R., L. Kervin, C. Glass, B. Gobby, R. Le Cornu, and S. Groundwater-Smith. 2020. *Teaching: Dilemmas, Challenges & Opportunities*. Cengage Australia.

Freire, P., and I. Shor. 1987. "What is the "Dialogical Method" of Teaching?" *Journal of Education* 169 (3): 11–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/002205748716900303.

Hammond, J., and P. Gibbons. 2005. "What is Scaffolding." *Teachers' Voices* 8:8–16.

Harris, J., S. Carrington, and M. Ainscow. 2018. *Promoting Equity in Schools: Collaboration, Inquiry and Ethical Leadership*. Routledge.

Harwood, D. 2001. "The Teacher's Role in Democratic Pedagogies in UK Primary and Secondary Schools: A Review of Ideas and Research." *Research Papers in Education* 16 (3): 293–319. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671520110058705.

Hattam, R. 2021, June. "Scholarship of Teaching Workshop Series [Paper Presentation]." University of South Australia Scholarship of Teaching Workshop Series, Adelaide, South Australia.

Hattam, R., and L. Zipin. 2009. "Towards Pedagogical Justice." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 30 (3): 297–301. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596300903036897.

Hidi, S., and K.A. Renninger. 2006. "The Four-Phase Model of Interest Development." *Educational Psychologist* 41 (2): 111–127.

Hyde, S. 2005. "Sharing Power in the Classroom." In *Negotiating the Curriculum*, edited by G. Boomer, C. Onore, and N. Lester, 75–85, Routledge.

Kamler, B., and B. Comber. 2005. "Turn-Around Pedagogies: Improving the Education of At-Risk students'." *Improving Schools* 8 (2): 121–131. https://doi.org/10.1177/1365480205057702.

Kemmis, S. 2009. "Action Research as a Practice-Based Practice." *Educational Action Research* 17 (3): 463–474. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650790903093284.

Kemmis, S., and P. Grootenboer. 2008. "Situating Practice in practice: Practice architectures and the cultural, social and material conditions for practice." In *Enabling praxis*, 37–62. Brill.

King, N. 2004. "Using Templates in the Thematic Analysis of Text." In *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research*, edited by C. Cassell and G. Symon, 257–270. London, UK: Sage.

MacDonald, M., and K. Weller. 2017. "Redefining Our Roles as Teachers, Learners, and Leaders Through Continuous Cycles of Practitioner Inquiry." *The New Educator* 13 (2): 137–147. https://doi.org/10.1080/1547688X.2016.1144121.

Mariani, L. 1997. "Teacher Support and Teacher Challenge in Promoting Learner Autonomy." *Perspectives: A Journal of TESOL Italy* 23 (2): 5–19.

Mayes, E. 2020. "Student Voice in School Reform? Desiring Simultaneous Critique and Affirmation." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 41 (3): 454–470. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2018.1492517.

McMath, S. 2008. "Implementing a Democratic Pedagogy in the Classroom: Putting Dewey into Practice." *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education/Revue canadienne des jeunes chercheures et chercheurs en éducation* 1 (1).

Morrison, K.A. 2008. "Democratic Classrooms: Promises and Challenges of Student Voice and Choice, Part One." *Educational Horizons* 87 (1): 50–60.

Nichols, S., and P. Cormack. 2017. *Impactful Practitioner Inquiry: The Ripple Effect on Classrooms, Schools, and Teacher Professionalism*. Teachers College Press.

Nolen, A. L., and J. V. Putten. 2007. "Action Research in Education: Addressing Gaps in Ethical Principles and Practices." *Educational Researcher* 36 (7): 401–407. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X07309629.

Robbins, J. 2020. "Practitioner Inquiry." In *Approaches to Qualitative Research: An Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research in American Music Education*, edited by C. Conway, 186–208, Oxford University Press.

Rodriguez, G.M. 2013. "Power and Agency in Education: Exploring the Pedagogical Dimensions of Funds of Knowledge." *Review of Research in Education* 37 (1): 87–120. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X12462686.

Seal, M., and P. Mayo, Eds. 2021. *Hopeful Pedagogies in Higher Education*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Skidmore, D., and K. Murakami. 2016. *Dialogic Pedagogy: The Importance of Dialogue in Teaching and Learning*. Bristol: Channel View Publications.

Smith, A., and M. Seal. 2021. "The Contested Terrain of Critical Pedagogy and Teaching Informal Education in Higher Education." *Education Sciences* 11 (9): 476. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11090476.

Storey, L. 2007. "Doing interpretive phenomenological analysis." In *Analysing qualitative data in psychology*, edited by E. Lyons and A. Coyle, 51–64. SAGE Publications.

Teo, P. 2019. "Teaching for the 21st Century: A Case for Dialogic Pedagogy." *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction* 21:170–178. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2019.03.009.