

A Professional Learning Model for Schools Based on School-University Research Partnering That Is Underpinned and Structured by a Micro-Credentialing Regime

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Abstract : There exists a body of literature that reports on the many benefits of partnerships between universities and schools, especially in terms of teaching improvement and school reform. This is because such partnerships can build significant teaching capital, by deepening and expanding the skillsets and mindsets needed to create the connections that support ongoing and embedded teacher professional development and career goals. At the same time, this literature is critical of such initiatives when the partnership outcomes are short-term or one-sided, misaligned to fundamental problems, and not expressly focused on building the desired teaching capabilities. In response to this situation, research conducted by Professor David Lynch and his TeachLab research team, has begun to shed light on the strengths and limitations of school/university partnerships, via the identification of key conceptual elements that appear to act as critical partnership success factors. These elements are theorised as an inter-play between professional knowledge acquisition, readiness, talent management and organisational structure. However, knowledge of how these elements are established, and how they manifest within the school and its teaching workforce as an overall system, remains incomplete. Therefore, research designed to more clearly delineate these elements in relation to their impact on school/university partnerships is thus required. It is within this context that this paper reports on the development and testing of a Professional Learning (PL) model for schools and their teachers that incorporates school-university research partnering within a systematic, whole-of-school PL strategy that is underpinned and structured by a micro-credentialing (MC) regime. MC involves learning a narrow-focused certificate (a micro-credential) in a specific topic area (e.g., 'How to Differentiate Instruction for English as a second language Students') and embedded in the teacher's day-to-day teaching work. The use of MC is viewed as important to the efficacy and sustainability of teacher PL because it (1) provides an evidence-based framework for teacher learning, (2) has the ability to promote teacher social capital and (3) engender lifelong learning in keeping professional skills current in an embedded and seamless to work manner. The associated research is centred on a primary school in Australia (P-6) that acted as an arena to co-develop, test/investigate and report on outcomes for teacher PL that uses MC to support a whole-of-school partnership with a university.

Keywords : teaching improvement, teacher professional learning, talent management, education partnerships, school-university research

Conference Title : ICDEIE 2023 : International Conference on Designing Effective Instructions and Education

Conference Location : Zurich, Switzerland

Conference Dates : September 11-12, 2023