



# **Towards the Teaching School: Partnering to create an exciting new future in teacher education.**

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Improving the academic performance of schools is a global preoccupation for governments. A pre-occupation that has its roots in the emergence of a global knowledge based economy which places a premium on intellectual capacity. This premium has consequently focused governments to improving the academic performance of their schools. Given the key role played by teachers in such an agenda school heads are being called upon to improve the teaching capacities of their teachers. This teaching improvement agenda is challenging because traditional approaches to teacher professional development --- the withdraw from class to workshop model--- prove ineffective and limiting in an age of knowledge production, innovation and applied creativity and constant change. In this paper we revisit the Teaching School concept (as theorised by authors such as Turner & Lynch, 2006; Smith & Lynch, 2010; Lynch, 2012) to propose a fresh approach to teacher professional learning: one that is embedded in the ‘teacher as researcher’ premise, new teaching arrangements and a partnership with a university.



Improving the academic performance of schools is a global preoccupation for governments. A pre-occupation that has its roots in the emergence of a global knowledge based economy which places a premium on intellectual capacity (Lynch et al., 2015). This premium has consequently focused governments to improving the academic performance of their schools (Lynch et al., 2015). Given the key role played by teachers in such an agenda (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Hattie, 2009) school heads are being called upon to improve the teaching capacities of their teachers. This teaching improvement agenda is challenging because traditional approaches to teacher professional development --- the withdraw from class to workshop model--- prove ineffective (Hattie, 2011; Calderhead et al., 2012) and limiting in an age of knowledge production, innovation and applied creativity and constant change (Lynch, 2012; Madden et al., 2015). In this paper we revisit the Teaching School concept (as theorised by authors such as Turner & Lynch, 2006; Smith & Lynch, 2010; Lynch, 2012) to propose a fresh approach to teacher professional learning: one that is embedded in the ‘teacher as researcher’ premise, new teaching arrangements and a partnership with a university. In order to deal with such a proposition, we introduce the concept of the ‘Teaching School’ and interrogate its features for fit in schools and in the teaching and learning improvement agenda.

### **What is the Teaching School Concept?**

The Teaching School is a parallel to the ‘teaching hospital’ in medicine, where the collective capacities and endeavours of a school (e.g. K-12) and a university (in this case an education faculty) are harnessed through formal partnership to create *a knowledge age ‘centre for innovation and advancement in teaching and learning’* (Turner & Lynch, 2006; Lynch, 2012). Put simply, what traditionally was ‘school work’ and that which was ‘university work’ in teacher education is combined such that each ‘partner’ has *an equal yet different contribution to be made* in the improving teaching and learning agenda (Smith & Lynch, 2010). There are in effect no traditional organisational boundaries, but each partner has a key and unique role to play, based on their expertise and charter (Turner & Lynch, 2006; Lynch, 2012).



### **What is the logic in the Teaching School concept?**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are witnessing rapid and exponential changes in all sections of society and the economy through the impact of technological innovation. Not just in ‘local contexts’ but in contexts that appear to ‘know no bounds’. Witness ‘globalisation’, ‘virtual reality’, and ‘artificial intelligence’ for example. Correspondingly, a personal capacity to use knowledge in new, novel, and interconnected ways is now the ‘new fundamental’ (Lynch, 2012; Berry, 2011; Christensen et al., 2011; Nowotny et al., 2002).

In the previous era, where stability, uniformity, and conformity were the maxims, organisations constituted their operations through traditions and established ways of doing things. This had the consequence of ensuring ‘what had been, remained so’. Schools, thus, mimicked this maxim with set study disciplines and set teaching and learning traditions and approaches. This is known as ‘Mode 1 learning’. In Mode 1 learning, knowledge is viewed largely as static and set and its application is established through prescribed and traditional ways, largely around the homogenised learning cohort (Gibbons, 2013; Novonty et al., 2001). Espousing, perfecting, and protecting the tradition of ‘things’ becomes the occupation of the leader (Lynch et al., 2015; Lynch, 2012).

In a knowledge age, socio-economic circumstance knowledge is constantly being generated, is dynamic, inter-connected, and disruptive. Personal capacities such as innovation, entrepreneurship, problem solving, and networking and partnering, thus, become paramount. Correspondingly, set study disciplines merge to become multi-disciplinary, multi-modal, and collaborative. At the heart of such arrangements is an embracing of knowledge production. This type of learning is termed Mode 2 (Gibbons, 2013; Novotny et al., 2002). Generating a cohesive vision, supporting change, establishing collaborations, and nurturing continuous organisational learning and development is the occupation of the leader (Lynch et al., 2015; Christensen et al., 2011; City, 2013).

As one can appreciate, a system of education developed for a Mode 1 circumstance will prove distinctly incongruent when society and the associated economy operate at speed through Mode 2 means (Gibbons, 2013; Madden, 2012a; 2012b; Lynch, 2012; Christensen et al., 2011). The Teaching School is, thus, a Mode 2 learning and research construct that nurtures human brain



power potentials and capacities, through new and customised logics and arrangements for *direct and sustained teaching and learning based outcomes* (Smith & Lynch, 2010; Lynch, 2012).

### **Joining Forces for Effects**

If one envisions ‘the school’ and ‘the university’ [through its education faculty] joining forces to focus on knowledge production and its transmission, as a multi-purpose and multi-dimensional entity, where each party has an equal yet different contribution to be made, the following logics prevail:

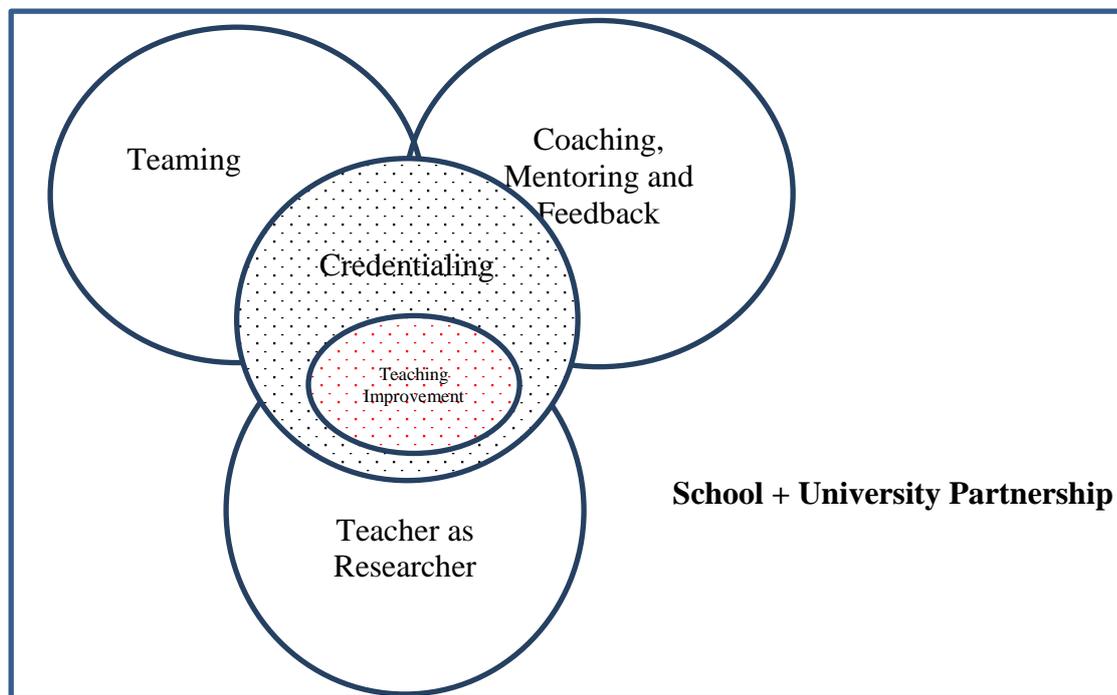
1. When one is working in ‘the school’, one is also working in ‘the university’ (and vice versa).
2. Staff in the school, thus, teach ‘in the school’ and also ‘in the university’ (and vice versa).
3. When staff in the school ‘work’, they also research and engage in professional learning. In early stages, University staff take the lead role, but as capacities, potentials, and the required culture matures, the lead in such arrangements falls to ‘the best placed person’ in the Teaching School.
4. When staff in the school research and learn, they also acquire credentials and qualifications and contribute to the ‘research base’ as researchers and knowledge producers.
5. When staff in the school ‘teach’ their students, they join forces with the university to evaluate outcomes, solve problems, test propositions for improvement, and work to achieving quality educational outcomes for students.
6. The ‘Teaching School’ then expands its new capacities to offer ‘learning’ opportunities to parties outside the ‘partnership’. In effect a business proposition emerges where ‘third parties’ enrol in the Teaching School as students, researchers, and fellow collaborators. One could imagine new tertiary level course offerings at under graduate and post graduate levels emerging in such arrangements. Conversely, one could imagine the Teaching School expanding to become a network of schools and universities.

7. For students (K-12 children) in the school, the University proper moves its various study curriculums into the school to offer 'senior students' early entry/ co and extension studies to enhance and 'head start' their future careers.
8. The 'what else' it has potential to do is only limited by one's imagination.  
(see Smith & Lynch, 2010).

### A Model for Understanding the Teaching School

Having made these introductory comments, where the logic and premise of the Teaching School have been outlined, the task now is to introduce and explain, through a simple model, the key elements of the Teaching School and to introduce its central vehicle for teaching and learning effects.

**Figure 1:** The elements and their relationship within the Teaching School concept.



There are six fundamental components in the Teaching School model: (1) a school/ university partnership; (2) a focus on teaching improvement; (3) credentialing as the central vehicle for improvement; (4) teaming; (5) coaching, mentoring, and feedback; and (6) the teacher acting



as researcher. Each is now discussed in turn. Before completing this task, it is important to point out that while each component is detailed individually for clarity and understanding, each component relies on the others in an orchestrated and deliberate fashion --- by this we implicate the key role played by the leaders in the Teaching School --- for overall effects and outcomes. Figure 1 exemplifies these elements and their relationship to each other.

#### (1) A School University Partnership

The central message in this article has been the premise of the school joining forces with a university education faculty to create a partnership that is focused on teaching improvement through Mode 2 logics. The forming of a committed and long-term partnership is the central logic in the teaching school model.

#### (2) A Focus on Teaching Improvement

The central mission of the Teaching School is to improve teaching and, in turn, that of student learning and to contribute to the research base through publications and formal learning opportunities for teachers (credentials). This component, thus, comes to represent the focus for teaching school activities and is captured by a series of goals and performance targets which guide and direct the endeavours within the Teaching School.

#### (3) Credentialing as the Vehicle for Teaching School Effects in Teaching and Learning Improvement.

A review of organisation theory reveals all organisations establish structures and arrangements which seek to provide clarity and focus the organisation to its vision and mission (Cummings & Worley, 2014; Jones, 2004). Missing, therefore, in discussions to this point is a vehicle in the Teaching School through which the core teaching and learning improvement business of the Teaching School is centralised and organised. In the Teaching School arrangement, a credentialing regime is established. The issuing of a credential has a three dimensions.

First the credential provides a curriculum and a structure for how ‘members’ of the Teaching School will engage in activities focused on teaching improvement. This credential could be formal as in post or undergraduate education degrees, or informal by way of certificates of

attainment or imagined simply as a culture that says: “studying and researching is what it means to be a teacher in our school”.

Second, it captures achievement and, thus, allows the recipient to use the credential to certify their new capabilities and to exchange it for further study into higher degrees in the university or advancements in employment. Third, the credential becomes a business proposition for the Teaching School in that the credential comes to represent a product that can be commercially offered to ‘other’ schools, teachers, and third parties and in doing so transfer and engender teaching improvement knowledge external to the Teaching School’s immediate environment. Table 1 exemplifies the credential logic through a customised *Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies*. Note the project based focus which creates the opportunity for customised-context specific learning.

The important points to note is the centrality of ‘teachers acting as researchers’, context specific learning foci, contextualised projects as the ‘assessment for learning’ regime, and the embedding of each teacher’s ‘study’ in teams and in an environment of coaching, mentoring, and feedback (CMF). We discuss the CMF in a section which follows.

**Table 1:** An example of a credentialing regime in a Teaching School arrangement.

Unit	Study Objectives	Key Content	Assessment for Learning Regime
Unit #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect data</li> <li>Evaluate and reflect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mode 2 Learning</li> <li>Teaching Improvement 1</li> <li>Principles of research</li> </ul>	<p><b>Project 1:</b> Conduct a seminar for peers that contextualises and locates mode 2 learning and the theories of teaching and learning improvement into a local circumstance that requires improvement.</p> <p><b>Project 2a:</b> Generate a problem based on data collected and which has local / contextual importance. Review literature and theorise a solution proposition. Seek feedback from peers and leadership.</p> <p><b>Project 2b:</b> Implement the proposition for improvement effects. Review for outcomes Report outcomes and engage in peer review.</p> <p><b>Project 3:</b> Lead, by way of coaching, mentoring, and feedback, a team focused on projects 1, 2a, and 2b. Evaluate and reflect on findings. Conduct a seminar with fellow leaders where central learnings are revealed and the contribution that has been made to the field of teaching and learning improvement is outlined and justified.</p>
Unit #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ideate and justify</li> <li>Theorise for solutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching Improvement 2</li> <li>Problem solving</li> <li>Research design</li> </ul>	
Unit #3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and test a proposition for improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching Improvement 3</li> <li>Innovation</li> <li>Research evaluation</li> </ul>	
Unit #4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor performance</li> <li>Report findings</li> <li>Reconceptualise for expanded application/improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching Improvement 4</li> <li>Entrepreneurship</li> <li>Leading improvement</li> <li>Research reporting</li> </ul>	

Expanding the credentialing logic, one could imagine ‘individual components’ of this graduate certificate being ‘credentialed’ (eg: Unit #1) as a ‘certificate of attainment’ outside of a formal



graduate certificate enrolment or teachers engaging within the graduate certificate arrangement in a fluid and cyclic fashion, depending on the individual circumstance, for overall teaching and learning improvement effects. Taken together 'graduation' is therefore based on defined study objectives having been met, irrespective of time enrolled or the journey within each unit.

An important point to make however, is that teaching work in a Teaching School is premised on 'everyone learning'. So, to work in a Teaching School as a teacher is to also enrol in the Teaching School as a student and, thus, the credential confirms achievement in this arrangement.

To this point, the components of partnership, teaching improvement, and credentialing have been outlined. While commentary has detailed their respective properties, their uniqueness in current understandings about teaching and learning improvement could be viewed as platitudinous or even Mode 1 in thinking. Missing are arrangements that support and generate Mode 2 thinking and approaches, thus providing a disruptive and innovation context for teaching and learning in the Teaching School. With this point in mind, the inter-related components of teaming, coaching, mentoring, and feedback, and teacher as researcher are detailed.

#### (4) Teaming

Schools have traditionally organised their pupils (K-12) into age related cohorts and assigned a single teacher to achieve defined learning outcomes in a classroom. In the Teaching School, teachers work as members of a teaching team. Each pupil in the school is profiled to identify a specific learning profile and the team then assigns teaching work based on such profiling. On another plane, the premise of teaming is used strategically to generate the required capacities that an individualised approach to teaching and learning requires. Importantly for the Teaching School, teaming foundations the premise of a Professional Learning Community (OECD, 2012; 2013). Teaming therefore comes to represent an opportunity for teachers to collaborate on teaching work, but also to learn and investigate new and context specific things (see: OECD, 2013; 2012). Teaming becomes the scaffold and the staging arena for a coaching, mentoring, and feedback regime where teachers act as researchers.



### (5) Coaching, Mentoring, and Feedback

Coaching, mentoring, and feedback (CMF) builds on the arrangement of teaching teams. Teaming in a CMF context is deliberate in that it sets about firstly to humanise the process of improving teaching (and by direct association learning) and to focus improvement contextual to day to day teaching work (Blank, 2011). The direct link to each teacher's work --- a year or discipline level team --- has the additional effect of ensuring a focus on the core business of 'teaching' in the team and, at the same time, an opportunity for each teacher to focus on the improvement of their teaching through what is a Professional Learning Community (or community of practice, see Wenger et al., 2002), where they act as a teacher researcher (Lynch & Madden, 2015). We discuss this concept in a section which follows.

We need to point out that CMF is not introduced to teachers as a strategy to identify poor performing staff, but as a means by which the teaching capacities of each teacher are strengthened and the collective capacities of the team, through learning, are harnessed to deal with the multitude of challenges individual students pose in classrooms and in schools more generally; the mantra for teachers can be captured by "a problem shared is a problem halved"<sup>1</sup>.

The third arm of the coaching and mentoring arrangement is 'feedback'. Feedback is intrinsically intertwined in the process of coaching and mentoring in that it is information that is revealed about how well one is doing in their efforts to achieve a defined goal. Importantly, it is the team that facilitates CMF and, thus, feedback comes to represent a move towards each team member 'knowing their teaching impact' (see Hattie, 2009) and, thus, what they need to focus on in order to improve. On another plane, feedback can be constituted as peer review, where research propositions and findings are reviewed for efficacy.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms/a+problem+shared+is+a+problem+halved.html>

Taken together, coaching, mentoring, and feedback is an arrangement that enables each teacher to focus on improving their practice, to explore and test propositions for improvement and innovation as a teacher researcher, and to collaborate for increased capacities and outcomes.

#### (6) Teachers as Researchers

The Teacher as Researcher (TAR) concept uses the potentials that the preceding five Teaching School components represent by applying principles of in-situ action research. The (TAR) concept involves teachers researching contextual problems by asking ‘why?’ type questions that lead to: the posing and testing of propositions; evaluating outcomes and findings; collaborating with colleagues and publishing findings (formally through journals and conferences and as part of the credentialing regime) as contributors in a Mode 2 learning context (Madden et al., 2015; Lynch & Madden, 2014; Aubusson et al., 2007).

More specifically TAR can be understood as an opportunity to:

- (1) Address teaching and learning knowledge gaps by enabling teachers to investigate voids in their (own) teaching practice and to solve localised problems;
- (2) Expand the applied knowledge base required for effective teaching and learning;
- (3) Innovate and test propositions for outcomes, effectiveness, and applicability;
- (4) Learn new things in context and of critical importance to the teacher; and
- (5) Understand and harness emerging technologies for future-based teaching and learning effects.
- (6)

A consequence of teachers undertaking this type of action research is that findings and outcomes become more meaningful (and personal) to the classroom practitioner (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006), promotes the professional voice of the teaching profession, and comes to highlight their new role in a Mode 2 society circumstance. The university’s role is to provide the required scientific supervisions and training and access to research-based systems, processes, and resources.

### **What is the first stage in moving towards a Teaching School?**

To begin, the Teaching School arrangement is to first understand where schools and universities 'sit' in the microcosm of the society in which they equally serve. The school's charter could be understood as preparing young people for work and life in the society, while the university is charged with advancing society through knowledge production and its transference into society through publications, consultancies, but also through preparing graduates for sophisticated learning --- credentialing (McAleese, 2014; Bergan & Damian, 2010). With these profiles in mind, the business / operating model of each entity must be 'appreciated' and 'respected' to enable joint resources to be mobilised for commencement. It is really a cautionary word about what must be considered and factored in the early stages to generate the confidences that the governing bodies of each entity will require. Once momentum and traction is gained, the Teaching School then seeks to establish 'a new and joint business/ operating model' using concrete outcomes as evidence for further innovative work. To exemplify these statements, four steps come into play.

Step 1: 'The School Engages' the University through a financially based research contract. This contract regime represents the business logic of how a university works and how its resources are triggered and mobilised. 'The research contract' is charged with:

- Supporting the collaborative development of the long-term Teaching School vision, its goals and performance indicators, and the plan for action.
- Establishing a formal research project to organise endeavours and to capture outcomes/ findings as evidence of performance and to inform society.
- Enabling the University to mobilise its resource base for Teaching School effect. This includes:
  - Access to data bases, libraries, research facilities, and the like.
  - Access to experts in various disciplines for advice, guidance, and overall project effects.
  - Higher learning opportunities through course offerings and credentials and extension learning programs through study abroad, staff exchanges, conference attendance, and networks for publication outputs.

- A Learning Management System to stage, manage, and monitor localised/ customised learning programs and to effect associated credentials.

Step 2: the University and school nominate the *leadership team* for the Teaching school. This body is the embodiment of the Teaching School and exists to formulate its future, monitor its progress, and enable its continual growth and development.

Step 3: The University appoints, at its cost, and in consultation with the school (ideally a highly accomplished and existing staff member of the school), the *Teaching School Leader* --- located within the school --- to manage the business of the Teaching School with the school's leadership team. Whilst located in the school, this position is employed by the University. This is important as it is the start of boundary blurring and, thus, the opening up of each partner for effect. Correspondingly the School accepts the Teaching School Leader as a member of the school's staff. This role has carriage of leading and operationalising the Teaching School (the substance of the university-school contract) with the school's leadership, developing, nurturing, and sustaining the partnership, generating various strategic designs, and fundamentally comes to represent a mode 2 resource to be exploited for overall effect by the School and the University in a teaching and learning and research perspective.

Step 4: In line with the 'contract' from Step 1, the Teaching School commences. This generally means:

- Formulating the focus of research and developments and improvements based on the ascertained profile of need in the Teaching School.
- Formulating embedded and formalised professional learning programs, based on the premise of the 'Teacher as Researcher' in an environment of in situ, coaching, mentoring, and feedback.
- Imagining and developing 'new and customised qualifications' that redefine and disrupt current higher education qualification regimes. A new set that is high worth, high status, and which generates high demand.
  - Formalising a credentialing regime to capture the learnings achieved in the Teaching School.



- Exploring course offerings for ‘students’ in the Teaching School to access higher education courses and direct entry provisions into the University.

In effect, the teaching school is, on one level, established and then nurtured within a long term vision as a potent opportunity for ongoing professional learning, but on a higher level, as a vehicle for explorative new teaching and learning business potentials and outcomes that are limited only by the collective group’s imagination and commitment to making a fundamental difference in a Mode 2 world.

### **Conclusion**

Schools are grappling with ongoing exponential changes occurring in society and the associated challenge of ensuring all their students are prepared for such a new world. Implicated in such an agenda is the teacher and their teaching capabilities. Traditional approaches to teacher professional learning, where teachers attend ‘outside’ workshops and the like, prove ineffective, disconnected to day-to- day teaching issues, and limiting in a mode 2 learning context. In this article, the Teaching School construct has been presented as a vehicle for enabling schools and universities to join forces as a mode 2 entity to pioneer new and effective approaches to teacher professional learning and more broadly to inform the teaching and learning field. The authors plan to progress the teaching school agenda by enrolling schools over coming years and informing the field as to outcomes and findings.

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