

## DEL 2

# Innledning

Den andre delen av boken består av artikler fra NAFOL-studenter og internasjonale ph.d.-studenter som kommer fra ulike kontekster, et vidt spektrum av emner og temaer, og fra ulike land: Norge, Island og Seychellene. Svava Björg Mörk fra University of Iceland skriver om det tredje rommet, møtepunktet mellom praksis og teori, i den islandske barnehagelærerutdanningen fra et historisk perspektiv. Andre artikler om barnehagen og barnehagelærerutdanningen er Kathrin Olsen og Abigail Croydons artikkel om støtten til barn med autisme i barnehagen. Justin Zelime, sammen med Mats Deutschmann fra Umeå universitet, presenterer forskning på språkundervisningen på Seychellene, som har en sammensatt språksituasjon. Tilbake i Norge så skriver Gro Løken, Ratib Lekhal og Peder Haug om kjønnsforskjeller i spesialundervisningen i grunnskolen, og overraskende nok så fant de små eller ingen forskjeller. Fra spesialundervisning til kroppsøving, i sitt bidrag påpeker Svein Olav Ulstad at når elevene får økt støtte til å være selvstendige og ta egne valg, øker prestasjonene og motivasjonen for faget. Det to siste artiklene i del 2 handler om lærerstudenter og skoleledere. Øystein Kvinge omtaler det kjente praksis–teori-gapet fra en ny innfallsvinkel ved å undersøke hvordan lærerstudenter forstår lærerens profesjonskunnskap, og hvordan studentene opplever at den kommer til syne i lærerutdanningen. I den siste artikkelen i del 2 argumenterer Pia Hagerup for at kunstbaserte metoder kan styrke de praktiske læringsprosessene hos deltakerne på rektorutdanningen. Del 2 gir et bredt og internasjonalt bilde av aktuelle og spennende temaer i lærerutdanningsforskningen per i dag.



## CHAPTER 4

# Historical Perspective of the Third Space in Icelandic Preschool Teacher Education

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“Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.” G. K. Chesterton

### **ABSTRACT**

Preschool teacher education in Iceland began in 1946 with a focus on ensuring the welfare of children. Since that time, education has changed both in Iceland and around the world, as has collaboration between practitioners and universities. A close look at the relationship between this field and departments of education in universities reveals that a disconnection has occurred. This paper examines the development of preschool teacher education in Iceland since the mid-1940s. Understanding the history of that development serves to clarify the present situation regarding preschool teacher education in Iceland. This research study is concerned with theory and practice in education, especially the construction of a third space: a collaborative space shared by preschools and universities in which dialogue and partnership play key roles. The findings show that over the years, the gap between theory and practice in Icelandic preschool teacher education has expanded. This disconnection between theory and practice is a reality in preschool teacher education in Iceland that should be addressed.

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## INTRODUCTION

At their inception, preschools responded to a social need by providing a service to the community. Because preschools are constructed by society, they continue to meet social needs and evolve over time. Today, however, preschools are far more than a service; they are spaces designed to allow children to be social actors in their own lives (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007; Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2011).

Early childhood education and preschool teacher education in Iceland parallel their counterparts in other Nordic countries in that they follow a model based on humanistic and child-centred values. During the 1970s and 1980s, Nordic countries invested in childcare so that the parents of children could balance their work and family lives (Einarsdóttir, 2011; Karila, 2017). Now, that investment is more heavily focused on children and their education as future citizens. Consequently, based on evidence that well-trained, educated staff members are the key to successful childcare (Karila, 2017), well-educated preschool teachers are seen as crucial in Iceland and other countries. These well-educated preschool teachers benefit children by increasing their cognitive abilities and impacting their later academic performance (Bakken, Brown & Downing, 2017; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). Moreover, because graduate teachers have referred to their practical training as the most valuable part of their education, practice in the field and effective guidance are critical components of teacher education (Mattsson, Eilertsen & Rorrison, 2011).

Examining teacher education and preparation for practice, it becomes apparent that there are concerns regarding the disconnection between theory and practice (Lohmander, 2015; Jónsdóttir, 2015; Zeichner, 2010). In terms of defining these two concepts, in this paper, “theory” refers to what is taught at a university, and “practice” is what occurs in the field. In teacher education, these two concepts are linked together, and they shape a student teacher and his or her ability to become a competent educator. Research regarding this disconnection has suggested creating a third space, indicating that interventions can have an impact on teacher education (Cuenca, Schmeichel, Butler, Dinkelman & Nichols Jr., 2011; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo & Collazo, 2004; Zeichner, 2010).

The present study examines how the third space has been presented in preschool teacher education in Iceland during various time periods. In the third

space, the mentor's practical knowledge, the university teacher's academic knowledge, and the student teacher's learning unite to create new knowledge by allowing participants to share knowledge, understanding, and experience. In the third space, people become aware of their boundaries and find ways to cross them, and when all participants venture into one another's space, collaboration ensues (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Martin, Snow & Franklin Torrez, 2011; Zeichner, 2010).

The present study is a historical analysis (Wyche, Sengers & Grinter, 2006) aimed at obtaining a deeper understanding of the history of preschool teacher education in Iceland. The research question is as follows: How is theory and practice integrated in preschool teacher education in Iceland during different time periods? To examine the third space shared by theory and practice, this chapter focuses on the third space, boundary crossing, and ways of fostering strong collaboration among stakeholders in preschool teacher education in Iceland.

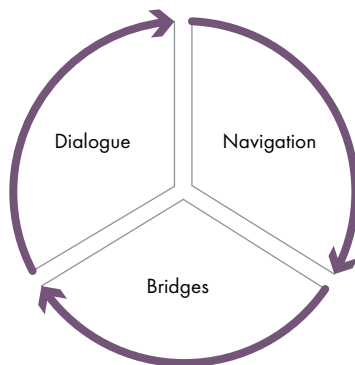
The next section provides a short introduction to the third space, as well as its definition and use in teaching and teacher education. It describes its connection with boundary crossings and the importance of crossing such lines to grasp the knowledge that flows between spaces. After that, the findings of the study will be presented and discussed in light of the literature regarding the third space and boundary crossing. Finally, conclusions will be drawn.

### **The third space in teacher education**

Conceiving of the third space almost invariably requires a study of Bhabha's (1990) definition and views of the concept, which he calls *hybrid space*. In short, when two cultures merge and hybridity occurs, a third, or hybrid, space emerges. Bhabha's (1990) definition clarified how the third space can function and the ways in which social entities can develop hybrid spaces. He also discussed the meaning of communication and negotiation in hybrid spaces and encouraged participants to be open-minded while learning new ways of conceiving and perceiving the world while crossing boundaries. As participants gain a broader worldview, they become more likely to expand upon and rethink their principles. Bhabha (1990) has also emphasised that in such shared spaces, all participants should feel equal and resist engaging in power struggles. As an extension of Bhabha's (1990) ideas, Soja's (1996) theory of third space is also vital. It stresses

the importance of thinking differently about spaces, understanding the past and its surroundings, and questioning the way things are and how they have developed. In particular, Soja (1996) maintained that spaces develop via social and historical interactions; they are neither solely regional nor attached to spatial entities.

According to Moje et al. (2004), there are at least three ways of viewing the third space: as a bridge between dialogue and knowledge, as a navigational space that allows actors to cross into different communities, and as a space in which conversation can bring two cultures into synchronised dialogue.



**Figure 4.1** Components of the third space (Moje et al., 2004, pp. 43-44).

When uniting discourse and knowledge in the third space, preschool education students, university teachers, and mentors in the field or in preschools have the opportunity to scaffold their learning and expand their knowledge while building bridges between what they and others know to generate new knowledge. Building bridges is an important aspect of the third space; it helps participants understand how they and others experience the world. Critically, these various perspectives can be remodelled to form a third space (Moje et al., 2004). At the same time, as in many other fields, the disconnection between theory and practice in preschool teacher education is common because what individuals think, do, and read in textbooks does not always represent reality. In that sense, the disconnection between theory and practice is a mismatch rather than a gap, with the latter implying a complete separation (Kvernbekk, 2012).

According to Zeichner (2010) and Jónsdóttir (2015), it is necessary to realign the mismatch created when student teachers move from universities to field practice. Though they are separate spaces, universities and preschools both work toward the common goal of educating student teachers, and therein lies the disconnection from, or mismatch with, that student teachers experience between the university classroom and actual preschools (Lohmander, 2015). It is necessary to strengthen the relationship between schools and universities, and one way of doing so involves developing strong collaboration between them (Zeichner, 2010). By strengthening field practice in teacher education to create a less hierarchical or even non-hierarchical interplay among actors, the third space can become a powerful learning arena in preschool teacher education (Zeichner, 2010).

Focusing on the current situation in preschool teacher education in Iceland, Jónsdóttir (2015) investigated the third space in preschool teacher education by examining the University of Iceland's policies and its collaboration with preschools in light of the literature on the third space. She concluded that both field practice in preschool teacher education and collaboration between Icelandic preschools and universities must be strengthened to facilitate stakeholders' conversations about learning in the third space. Boundary crossing reinforces such collaboration by enabling stakeholders to challenge the status quo (Jónsdóttir, 2015; Zeichner, 2010).

In the third space, participants – in this case, university teachers, mentors, and students – can be innovative, think differently, exercise creativity, and create something new and distinct from what already exists (Bhabha, 1990). To create such an environment, it is important to consider the crucial role that dialogue and reflection play in preschool teacher education. There is a significant difference between professional learning as an individual and learning within a community. In a community, professional growth is more likely to occur as a result of dialogue that originates in collaboration (Fullan, 2016; Tsui & Law, 2007). The best learning happens in cultures that are collaborative; however, it takes time to foster such a culture, and it is important to create an environment of mutual trust so that dialogue can occur (Fullan, 2016).

Because all learning involves boundaries, participants who cross boundaries become representatives of their original spaces because they possess specific knowledge that they can introduce and be integrated into the third space (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011).

Zeichner (2010) presents various ways of strengthening the relationship between universities and the field experiences of student teachers, emphasising the importance of hybrid spaces in teacher education. One such suggestion is having hybrid positions, meaning that universities employ capable teachers from the field, who according to Zeichner (2010), become *boundary-crossers*. These teachers must have a good connection with the working arena; they must also be competent and skillful in collaborating with universities and preschools (Zeichner, 2010). In Iceland, as in other countries, there is political pressure to strengthen education by building a collaborative community that includes practice and the university.

## THE STUDY

The present study uses historical analysis (Jupp, 2006; Wyche et al., 2006) to illuminate records and accounts of the past. In general, historical analysis makes sense of the past by finding the traces it leaves behind. Using this method, researchers examine various sources and ensure that the data represent the past, not the present. For the various sources to be reliable, they must be preserved in open archives and available for analysis. Historical analysis is useful in explaining the development of a phenomenon over time, for example, the development of preschool teacher education in a specific country. Although it is important not to judge the data retrospectively, it is equally important not to draw a straight line between the past and the present, and conducting a historical analysis helps researchers avoid this tendency (Jupp, 2006; Wyche et al., 2006). In this study, the research question is as follows: How is theory and practice integrated in preschool teacher education in Iceland during different time periods?

Searching for an answer to the above question, available literature pertaining to preschool teacher education was collected. The data were obtained from several places, including the library at the School of Education at the University of Iceland, where books and documents about preschool teacher education in Iceland were obtained from historical texts, including newspaper articles, interviews with pioneers in the field, and academic journals about the development of education. The researcher also consulted: the Internet (collecting articles and news about education and steering documents), field practice project managers at the University of Akureyri and the University of Iceland (obtaining reports about field practice), university homepages, and teachers in the field. Descriptive



coding (Saldana, 2016) was used to analyze the data. Thereafter, the data were categorised into themes. This process began by investigating preschool teacher education in general, and field practice in preschool teacher education more specifically by examining how their integration (the third space) was presented in the texts. Thus, the focus of the analysis was on field practice, the relationship between theory and practice, connections, and collaboration.

### **The third space in preschool teacher education in Iceland during various time periods**

Preschool teacher education in Iceland began with pioneers who focused on the welfare and cognitive development of children in Reykjavik; they sought to create an organisation that would focus on nurturing those values (Guðmundsson, 1949). Sumargjöf, an alliance established in 1924, marked the beginning of the evolution of Icelandic preschools and would ultimately lead to the development of preschool teacher education in Iceland (Guðmundsson, 1949; Sigurðardóttir, 1998). In 1906, the first nursery school for children ages 3–18 months opened in Iceland. In 1924, a Fröbel kindergarten was established, and in 1932, Sumargjöf founded their first preschool (Guðmundsson, 1949).

The findings are divided into five chronological periods. This sharpened the focus of the research and raised a question that helped to guide the analysis: – namely, how are theory and practice integrated into preschool teacher education in Iceland during different time periods? The reason some periods are discussed more than others is that during the first decades, there were many changes in teacher education, while other periods were less influential. The first period (1946–1967) involved the inception and early development of preschool education in Iceland. The second period (1967–1979) involved changes due to the government's nationalisation of preschool teacher education. The third period (1990–1995) focused on distance learning. During the fourth period (1991–2000), preschool teacher education was first offered at the university level at the University of Akureyri in 1996 and at Iceland University of Education in 1998. Finally, during the fifth period (2000–2015), preschool teacher education at universities shifted from the undergraduate to the graduate level. Together, the five periods tell the story of the development of preschool teacher education in Iceland from diverse angles, especially in terms of singular approaches to collaboration.

### THE BEGINNING: 1946–1967

Initially, educators who had received preschool teacher education had studied abroad. It was not until 1946 that the women-only preschool teacher college, Uppeldisskóli Sumargjafar (later Fósturskóli Sumargjafar), was founded in Iceland. During that year, there were only three educated preschool teachers working for Sumargjöf (Guðmundsson, 1949). The connection between the field and academia was intense because some of the young women worked, studied, and lived at the preschool (Guðmundsson, 1949; Jónsdóttir, 2004; Sigurðardóttir, 1998). Until 1964, Valborg Sigurðardóttir, the first principal involved in preschool teacher education (Jónsson & Helgadóttir, 2010), was the primary contact between the college and the preschools. She met with future teachers twice a week as they performed their field practice (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). Students were paid during field practice, partly due to the lack of educated teachers. It was not until 1977 that student teachers entered preschools as students, rather than as paid workers. The pedagogical and educational philosophy of the programme stemmed from Dewey's pragmatic approach, while Gesell's maturational theory of developmental physiology evolved as a progressive movement that strongly influenced both field practice and theoretical learning. The first year of formal education was actually 18 months long, including 9 months of theory and 9 months of field practice, but in 1957, this "year" was expanded to two years (Einarsdóttir, 2012; Sigurðardóttir, 1998).

Literature from and about the period clarifies that although the line between theory and practice was blurred, those who experienced this shift look back on it with appreciation (Guðmundsson, 1949; Jónsdóttir, 2004; Sigurðardóttir, 1998). The literature suggests that the third space was not obvious, because the stakeholders had merged. Many of the young women worked, lived, and studied at the preschool. However, the principal met with future teachers twice a week, and the literature underscores the students' opportunities to engage in dialogue about their experiences while studying. There does not seem to have been any clear hierarchy in the student–principal relationship, and the third space seems to have emerged as a directional space that allowed the participants to cross communities, build stronger dialogue, and achieve a better understanding (Moje et al., 2004; Zeichner, 2010).

### **New opportunities in education: 1967–1979**

Before the second period, preschool teacher education was a two-year programme of study. However, beginning in 1968, a year in what was called preparatory school was included. This arrangement had a decisive impact on the structure and future of preschool teacher education in Iceland. It was intended to better prepare students for the further education and professional work. As preparation took place, both students and teachers could assess the students' abilities. Later, the structure of education changed; it came to be believed that focussing on practical education in preparation for the field was more fruitful than only providing them with theoretical concepts and could better prepare them by providing more knowledge before they started their paid practicum or field practice. The thinking of Gesell and Dewey continued to inspire the pedagogy and educational philosophy used (Sigurðardóttir, 1998).

In 1973, after 25 years of preschool teacher education in Iceland, the first law regarding the field (*Lög um Fósturskóla Íslands*, 1973) was passed (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). The name of the school changed from *Fóstruskóli Sumargjafar* to *Fósturskóli Íslands*, and the state took control of the education that occurred there. The name was changed because a new law was passed that ensured equal access to preschool teacher education for men and women (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). The law stipulated that education must be built on a theoretical basis that provided theoretical knowledge of pedagogy and psychology, which marked a significant step toward the development of preschool teacher education. In 1979, the Ministry of Education (*Reglugerð*, 1979) regulations stated that field practice should be no less than one-third of the total study time. While field practice semesters were shortened, they became more frequent and were spread across the educational programme (Sigurðardóttir, 1998).

During the first school year, the only full-time employee was the principal, who worked with a field practice teacher hired to fill a one-year, temporary position. In subsequent years, additional full-time teachers were hired, thereby allowing more students to gain admission into the programme (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). The college's teachers were interested in studying Dewey and practicing his philosophy of learning by doing through theme-focused work. In 1979, changes in the curriculum began to integrate that work into theory and practice (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). During those influential years for preschool teacher

education in Iceland, via adding more theory, education became more heavily focused on academic knowledge. This shift marked a drastic change from the idea that field practice was as important as theory.

Theme-focused work was a new approach the teacher training. As the school grew, more teachers were hired, and more students were accepted into the programme. In the second year, students met with the field practice teacher at least once a month to discuss their practice and learning. During this period, the third space took the form of building bridges via dialogue and knowledge; students had assignments, and they met to discuss their experiences (Moje et al., 2004). Thus, both students and teachers were visible, and the connection to the field remained strong.

### **Reaching further with distance learning: 1990–1995**

In 1991, distance learning was established in Fósturskóli Íslands (Kristjánsdóttir, 1995; Sigurðardóttir, 1998). The need for educated preschool teachers grew, especially in rural areas. In 1990, the Minister of Education appointed a work group to prepare for distance learning education (Kristjánsdóttir, 1995; Sigurðardóttir, 1998). By adding distance learning, Fósturskóli Íslands was able to admit more students by making coursework available to everyone, regardless of location. The Internet and the use of email strengthened the communication between teachers and students (Sigurðardóttir, 1998).

The students' course of study was spread out over four years instead of three, and it was equally distributed between theory and field practice, as well as within local education (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). To ensure that distance learning was equal to school-based learning and to end rumours that it was merely discounted learning, the Ministry of Education carefully examined the programme and concluded that distance learning was as effective and professional as school-based education and that it prepared students for their future profession (Kristjánsdóttir, 1995; Sigurðardóttir, 1998). By adding distance learning to education and using the Internet, the collaboration between Fósturskóli Íslands and the field was strengthened. The opportunity for students to enrol and communicate with teachers regardless of their location became more realistic (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). In accordance with Moje et al. (2004), the third space was shaped by the Internet and email. These factors helped the cultures of the

field and college to construct a space for dialogue, with the students acting as the link between the field and the college (Moje et al., 2004).

### **Preschool teacher education at the university level: 1991–2000**

In 1993, the Ministry of Education appointed a group to prepare a framework for legislation that would provide guidelines for all levels of teacher education in Iceland (Menntamálaráðuneytið, 1995; Sigurðardóttir, 1998). The act addressed economic and professional concerns. The education of elementary school teachers had been conducted at the university level for 20 years, and proponents of the legislation argued that the change would provide increased independence in the field of early childhood education (Einarsdóttir, 2011). Fósturskóli Íslands and the preschool teachers' union worked toward elevating preschool teacher education to the university level. In 1996, before they reached that goal, the University of Akureyri offered preschool teacher education at the university level, with teaching taking place for on-site and distance students at the same time. Distance students participated through videoconferencing centres, which were located in various municipalities and managed in collaboration with the university (Hug- og Félagsvísindasvið, Kennaradeild: Fjarnám, 2016; Jónsson & Helgadóttir, 2010; Sigurðardóttir, 1998).

In 1998, preschool teacher education at Fósturskóla Íslands was combined with the Iceland University of Education, and preschool teacher students graduated with a bachelor's degree that year (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). Consequently, preschool teacher education became more theoretical, and the connection between theory and practice become one of its salient characteristics (Jónsson & Helgadóttir, 2010). After preschool teacher education became a university education, fewer students applied, and the university offered a diploma in preschool teacher education for assistants working in preschools who had at least three years of experience. They could then add to that education, finish a B.Ed. in preschool teacher education, and become preschool teachers (Einarsdóttir, 2012).

Major changes occurred after preschool teacher education was shifted to the university level, especially regarding field practice. Specifically, field practice changed from comprising one-third of the programme to only comprising one-fifth of it (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). While a heavier focus on theory was apparent,

the connection between theory and practice became part of the educational programme (Jónsson & Helgadóttir, 2010). As the data show, the third space did not seem to be very apparent, and it is possible that a greater focus was placed on changes in education. Slowly, it seems as though theory and practice began to drift apart, and the disconnection between the two began.

### **Pre-school teacher education at a graduate level and changing times: 2000–2015**

During the last several years, changes in preschool teacher education in Iceland have included students' graduating with a master's degree (Lög um menntun og ráðningu kennara og skólastjórnenda við leikskóla, grunnskóla og framhaldsskóla no. 87/2008) and the Iceland University of Education becoming part of the University of Iceland. Preschool teacher education is now available at both the University of Iceland and the University of Akureyri.

Preparation for the expansion of teacher education began around 2000 (Sigurðardóttir, 2014). In 2004, a report on the need to change preschool and primary teacher education was presented, including a five-year plan that called for education to be increased and brought in line with that in other European countries. With an emphasis on professional development for teachers, one drawback of the plan was the shortening of the field practice periods (Einarsdóttir, 2011; Kennaraháskóli Íslands, 2004). As seen in two reports from the University of Iceland (Pétursdóttir, 2011; Sigurðardóttir, 2014) and one from the University of Akureyri (Hreiðarsdóttir, Steingrímsdóttir & Þorsteinsson, 2011), field practice continues to be acknowledged as an important part of preschool teacher education, and theory is taught to prepare students for field practice. Another change at the University of Iceland was that field practice was no longer an independent course; instead, it became part of the programmatic coursework. According to the reports, field practice empowers students in the field and helps them become aware of and skilled at implementing the theoretical aspects of their work. During this period, the third space consisted of cooperation between preschools and universities, with an emphasis on field practice being an important part of preschool teacher education and theory being taught to prepare students for the field (Hug-og Félagsvísindasvið, Kennaradeild: Vettvangsnám, 2016; Menntavísindasvið, Vettvangsnám í Kennaradeild: Leikskólakennarafræði, 2016).

## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Regarding the integration of theory and practice in preschool teacher education in Iceland during various times, the findings indicate that many changes have occurred. In the beginning, the relationship between teachers and students was close, and the collaborative space, or the third space, is apparent in the data. Bhabha's (1990) definition of the third space, in which he discusses the importance of merging of cultures, as well as the importance of boundary crossing, obviously applies to the beginning of preschool teacher education in Iceland. According to Akkerman and Bakker (2011), all learning involves boundaries, and those who cross them becomes representatives of their original spaces. Throughout the history of education, it is clear that those who lead education strive to make it better, empower students with knowledge, and maintain a connection to practice. However, as the focus on theory increased and the focus on practice decreased, a gap seems to have been formed between the field and universities.

Today, theory comprises a larger part of teacher education than it did in 1946. Unsurprisingly, theoretical knowledge preparation has increased, and the length of education has expanded. Building a powerful third space might be a means to improve education and narrow the gap between theory and practice in preschool teacher education (Jónsdóttir, 2015). In a study on educational policy changes in Sweden and the implementation of changes regarding the relationship between theory and practice, Lohmander (2015) concluded that field practice was a critical part of preschool teacher education. This conclusion is in line with findings from 1991 to 2015 suggesting that in preschool teacher education, field practice continues to be acknowledged as important.

Progressively, the collaborative space occupied by preschool teacher students, their mentors, and university teachers has diminished, which has created the gap discussed in this paper. To empower field practice, the current study supports Jónsdóttir's (2015) recommendation to strengthen collaboration between Icelandic preschools and universities. Boundary crossers can bridge this gap by connecting universities and preschools while working in the third space (Jónsdóttir, 2015; Zeichner, 2010). Preschool teacher education should not be a matter of "them" versus "us"; rather, it should encompass the collective "we", which a third space can help create (Lohmander, 2015). It is crucial that the field

of practice and universities cooperate with one another. By connecting theory and practice to create a joint learning arena, teachers can become empowered to be more competent; in so doing, their professional understanding will become stronger, which will ultimately benefit their students (Kelchtermans, 2009).

Considering Soja's (1996) theory of the third space and the importance of thinking differently about educational spaces, as well as understanding the historical development, it seems that the current preschool teacher education programme in Iceland needs to be revisited. Attention should be given to how third spaces can be integrated in the preparation of preschool teachers. Soja (1990) argues that spaces develop via social and historical interactions. He said that they are neither solely regional nor attached to spatial entities. Therefore, the creation of the third space is not connected to regions or buildings, perhaps more to attitudes, and participants have the freedom to develop their own third space.

Ways of establishing a stronger, more vital connection to the field are worthy goals that should challenge and encourage all stakeholders in preschool teacher education. Creating spaces in which theory and practice meet will ensure that mentors, university-based teacher educators, and student teachers can cross boundaries. This will improve the quality of preschool education in Iceland and make the profession more vigorous. By strengthening the connection between theory and practice and between the field and universities, students may become more aware of the realities of the profession. All stakeholders are working toward the same goal: to prepare and educate preschool student teachers so they can become competent, caring, and effective educators. Therefore, it is crucial for preschool teacher education in Iceland to approach that goal with a shared vision if Iceland is to empower preschool teacher education and its preschools as a whole.



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