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Prologue 2

Practicum teachers' and preservice teachers' experiences

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Part 2 of the present anthology highlights and provides illustrations of the subjects and activities, as well as the perspectives and experiences of the practicum teachers and preservice teachers involved in the project *Rehearsing Teaching Professionally* (ReTPro).

On the one hand, the term *teacher educator* is used for both practicum teachers in schools and campus teachers at university to stress the common responsibility of both participants in teacher education. On the other hand, we favour the term preservice teachers (PSTs) to avoid confusion between the term student teachers and students (i.e. pupils) in schools.

The research project ReTPro is a collaborative project between Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, the municipalities Haugesund and Stord, three schools (one in Haugesund and two in Stord), and the international advisory board, including Ruth Leitch (Queen's University Belfast), Anna Sfard (University of Haifa), Gert Biesta (Maynooth University; University of Edinburgh), Joanne O'Flaherty (University of Limerick), Colin Christie (University of Aberdeen), Elaine Munthe (Norwegian Knowledge Center for Education), and Kari Smith (Norwegian University of Science and Technology). The partnership with the schools is a constituting feature of ReTPro. In fact, one of the project's aims has been to bridge the so-called 'theory practice gap' (e.g. Phillips & Condy, 2023), which also leads to a gap between teacher education on campus and teacher education in practicum schools.

The Norwegian regulations relating to national guidelines for primary and lower secondary teacher education (UHR, 2025) emphasise integrity and coherence between theory and practice. However, there are different opinions on what characterises the regulations and guidelines, and how coherence is best ensured. Since antiquity, researchers have struggled to understand the relationship between theory and practice – that is, either as two opposing positions or two different positions that must interact with each other. Some researchers (e.g. Unneland, 2009; Trøhaugen, 2010) examine the connection between theory and practice, and what this connection has to say for the professional qualification of teachers. Others examine the theory–practice challenge as a bridge builder problem, where theory must convince of its potential usefulness for practice (Finne et al., 2017).

Traditionally, the theoretical aspects of teacher education are taught at university before PSTs start their practicum, normally three weeks every semester in Norway. They then come back to university to continue their

studies. Numerous attempts have been made to ensure that what they learn on campus is relevant to what they learn during practicum, and to check on whether what they learn during practicum is taken up and built upon when they return to campus. Even so, the impression of a gap between the two learning arenas seems to live on. This may be due to different cultures and languages. PSTs often complain about their education not really preparing them for their profession. This is known as 'the practice shock' (Delamarter, 2015) or 'problem of enactment' (Kennedy, 1999).

Within the context of teacher education, the relationship between theory and practice could be seen as interdependent or as a continuum. Practical teaching in the classroom is at least to some degree based on theory. Theory and research on teaching are seldom only theoretical, but usually related to practice. There is also a theory of practice built into the practice that the practicum teachers demonstrate to the PSTs.

The ReTPro project advocates that it is important to increase collaboration across what is often seen as a gap between separate arenas. Our approach aligns with the strand of research known as practice-based teacher education (e.g. Jensen & Klette, 2023). We suggest that teacher education increases its focus on practising teaching on campus by rehearsing, trying out, and reflecting *in* and *on* practice before, during, and after the practicum periods (see also the prologue by Ruth Leitch in this anthology).

During the entire ReTPro project, the partners have collaborated and exchanged experiences, resulting in learning and development for all participants.

Part 2 of this anthology shows that most aims of the project have been realised, for example, the objective to 'structurally, conceptually, and practically enable teacher educators, PSTs, and practicum schools to work collaboratively to develop purposeful and effective repertoires'. Indeed, the project studies 'PSTs', teacher educators' and mentor teachers' thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes regarding rehearsing teaching, creating understandings of how to build teaching repertoires effectively to meet the New Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Education's Ambitions for Democratic Citizenship' (application to the Norwegian Research Council).

The project was conducted and examined around two main structures: i) Leading classroom conversations and facilitating dialogues, and ii) leading process drama as a whole-class educational process.

After discussions in the collaborative project meetings, on-campus and practicum teachers operationalised a set of rehearsable activities in three different subjects in teacher education.

First, in mathematics, the activities were specifically designed to elicit students' mathematical thinking through dialogue (dialogic teaching).

Second, in English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL), the focus was on developing intercultural citizenship using teacher-in-role and later talk moves to elicit vocabulary acquisition during whole-class discussions (dialogic teaching).

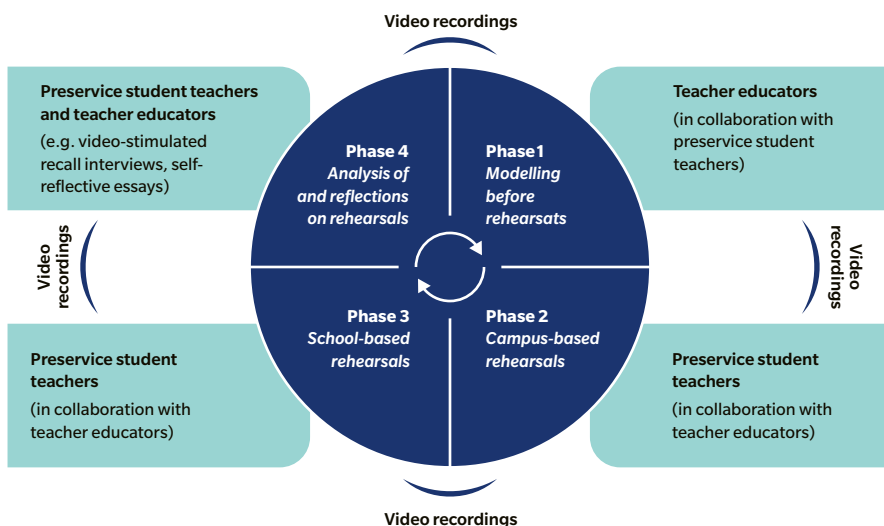
Third, the subject pedagogy investigated PSTs' reflections on the use of talk moves when conducting individual student-teacher conversations ('*elevsamtaler*' in Norwegian) in practicum.

Mathematics, EFL/ESL, and pedagogy were chosen as subjects for interventions during the project, involving researchers from these disciplines and practicum teachers who were teaching at school. The participants collaborated on identifying and specifying target and focus for the rehearsals. They developed and planned the activities to be rehearsed and participated in the rehearsals and reflections before sharing the experiences. A core concept in the ReTPro project is *rehearsing for teaching* (the title of the present anthology), and the idea that by rehearsing different aspects of teaching, the PSTs can become better prepared for their professional life.

Focusing on rehearsing on campus, and not only during the practicum periods, is seen as a way of bridging the theory–practice gap. When designing the rehearsal activities in the project, ReTPro was inspired by McDonald et al. (2013), and developed the following ReTPro rehearsal cycle:

Figur P2.1

The ReTPro rehearsal cycle (inspired by Mc Donald et al., 2013)



As shown in Figure P2.1, all four phases were video recorded and focused on rehearsals from different perspectives. The teacher educators (i.e. practicum and campus teachers), and PSTs were involved in all four phases.

The articles written by the practicum teachers in this part of the anthology are structured from the particular to the universal, that is, from subject-related issues in mathematics and EFL/ESL to pedagogical issues. The contributions show how the practicum teachers and PSTs involved in ReTPro have worked to strengthen the research on both action and reflection, to make reflection more active and action more reflective (Schön, 1983). The examples highlight how the practicum teachers built professional teaching repertoires of embodied, reflective, and purposeful action.

During one of the collaboration meetings, the concept of practice events was introduced and discussed. Ivanič (2009) claims that practice consists of a series of events. When you know a practice, you will recognise events belonging to this practice. Events are specific and observable, while the concept of practice refers to underlying patterns which partly regulate events (Ivanič, 2009, pp. 114–115).

In this part of the anthology, the practicum teachers present snippets from practicum in the form of three types of events: 1) practicum narratives, that is, a story about a ReTPro event from practicum involving all participants, 2) close-up snapshots, that is, the description of one event as detailed as possible, and/or 3) reflections on action after the event took place. The following four articles represent such glimpses of practicum events. In addition, two of the PSTs who took part in the project present their experiences and reflections in a separate article.

Article 5 is from the practicum teacher Ingeborg Glette Åsland. She has observed PSTs as they enact their prepared and rehearsed activities in the subject mathematics through several rounds of the rehearsal cycle. She highlights the importance of the partnership between the different teacher educators in the project.

Article 6 provides examples from the subject EFL/ESL. It is written by practicum teacher Lena Kirkvoll Traa. It contains the enactment of two different activities. The first one uses teacher-in-role as a tool to encourage pupils' thinking and reflecting on adopting others' perspectives. The second one describes the use of talk moves to elicit vocabulary acquisition. Both examples underline the importance of the rehearsal phase, and how thorough preparation before enactment is a success factor.

Article 7 illustrates how the principles of the ReTPro rehearsal cycle can be used in mentoring PSTs in other aspects of the teaching profession than the traditional classroom situation. In this case, the focus is on individual teacher-student conversations (in Norwegian *elevsamtaler*) designed to build strong relationships with the students and investigate how they cope, both academically and socially. This article is written by practicum teacher Kristin Koløy.

Article 8 focuses on another central and more general feature of the teaching profession: the management of complex classroom situations, including group dynamics in each class. This article is written by practicum teacher Lilly Anne Litlabø. It focuses on how she, as a practicum teacher, models such situations for the PSTs, and reflects with them afterwards. This article highlights phases 1 (i.e. modelling) and 4 (i.e. reflection), and how these phases can be utilised.

In Article 9, Isabelle Grude Christiansen and Thea Karoline Sømme report on their experiences with, and reflections on, participating in the ReTPro project as preservice teachers. More specifically, they examine the drama convention teacher-in-role by delving into the four phases of the ReTPro rehearsal cycle.

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