PAS DE DEUX: THE COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COOPERATING TEACHERS AND PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

PHILIPPA PARKS *Université de Sherbrooke*

ABSTRACT. The practicum experience is a crucial moment of learning for a pre-service teacher (PST). At the heart of the experience is the relationship PSTs have with their cooperating teachers (CTs). To examine how this relationship was negotiated during the practicum, this article applied Cortazzi's analysis of narrative approach to stories told by 13 PSTs, stories that comprised part of a larger mixed-method study. Findings from analysis of the more than 200 narratives told by the 13 PSTs disclosed the several ways in which PSTs experienced support from their CTs, including planned introductions of the PST to the classroom students, the CT's explicit support of PST decisions, and a negotiated withdrawal of the CT's presence.

PAS DE DEUX : LA RELATION DÉLICATE ENTRE LES ENSEIGNANTS COOPÉRANTS ET LES ENSEIGNANTS EN FORMATION INITIALE

RÉSUMÉ. Le stage est un moment crucial de l'apprentissage pour un enseignant en formation initiale (EFI). Au cœur de cette expérience se trouve la relation que les enseignants en formation initiale entretiennent avec leurs enseignants coopérants (EC). Pour examiner cette relation, cet article applique l'analyse de l'approche narrative aux histoires racontées par 13 enseignants en formation. Les résultats de l'analyse de plus de 200 récits ont révélé les différentes façons dont les EFP ont bénéficié du soutien de leur EC, notamment les présentations planifiées de l'EFP aux élèves de la classe, le soutien explicite de l'EC aux décisions de l'EFP et le retrait négocié de la présence de l'EC.

The practicum experience is a crucial moment of learning for a pre-service teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). At the heart of this experience is the relationship that the pre-service teacher (PST) has with their cooperating teacher (CT) who hosts the PST in their

classroom (Badia & Clarke, 2021; Clarke et al., 2014; Mena et al., 2016). The quality of mentorship that the PST receives from their CT is critical to the process of helping the PST develop their professional identity (Thomas, 2017; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011), teaching efficacy (Atay, 2007), teaching skills (Badia & Clarke, 2021), and resilience (Fives et al., 2007; Hong, 2010). CTs play an essential role in teacher education as gatekeepers to eventual certification (Clarke et al., 2014) and in determining when, how, and to what degree the PSTs can be allowed to take over teaching in the classroom during the practicum experience.

Unfortunately, the work of mentoring a new teacher is often inadequately supported by teacher education programs (Clarke et al., 2014), leaving CTs to determine on their own how to instruct and support the PSTs they welcome into their classrooms. Complicating this task is an underlying conflict of interest. As Clarke et al. (2014) explain, most CTs are first and foremost "teachers of children" (p. 185) and have strong feelings of responsibility towards their students, which may make them hesitant to leave the class wholly in the hands of an inexperienced teacher. CTs are also required to model effective practice for their PSTs (Badia & Clarke, 2021; Clarke et al., 2014; Mena et al., 2016), as well as give feedback and evaluate the PST, which means they must balance a need to be present in the classroom with a need to provide space for the PST to learn to teach. It is this negotiated dance between the CT and the PST that is the subject of this article: When should the CT step in? When should they step back?

Learning to become a teacher in Canada and in Quebec

The research project that is the subject of the present article took place in the province of Quebec in Canada and drew upon the experiences of PSTs who were studying to become English as a second language (ESL) teachers. It is important to note that in Canada, education falls under the jurisdiction of the provinces. Each province's ministry of education determines educational objectives and curricula, including the required number of practicum hours for teacher certification. In Quebec, unlike other Canadian provinces, French is spoken by the majority of its population; French is the province's official language. As a result, one of the core subjects that students are required to learn in the French-language schools — where the majority of students are enrolled in the province — is English as a second language. The term "second language" reflects the status of the English language in Quebec: English is the second official language after French, which is the first language of Quebec (cf. Steinbach & Kazarloga, 2014; Riches & Parks, 2021).

In the course of their 4-year bachelor's degree in education (BEd) in Quebec, PSTs participate in four practicum experiences, one for each year of the program. The initial experiences are designed as an observation period, allowing the PSTs to witness CTs model successful teaching strategies and techniques. As the PSTs progress through their program, the percentage of classes they are expected to teach independently increases. By the third practicum, PSTs are generally required to teach about 75% of the teaching load and up to 100% in the fourth and final practicum.

The progression from observation of a teacher model to assuming teaching themselves — thus becoming "the teacher" in the classroom — occurs on a smaller scale within each practicum experience. Typically, the 1st week of the practicum is reserved for observation and co-teaching with the CT, after which the PST is expected to take over teaching students. At the same time, the CT increasingly steps back and supports the PST. Both on a macro level (throughout the teacher education program) and on a micro level (within each practicum), there is a clear movement from watching and identifying with a teacher who models teaching towards teaching on one's own: becoming the teacher.

Theoretical framework: Professional identity

Identity is a complex construct. In educational research, a teacher's professional identity is neither fixed nor unitary; rather, it is understood to be fluid and multiple (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). A teacher's professional identity must also maintain a complex and dynamic equilibrium, shifting between a teacher's professional self-image and the variety of roles teachers feel that they have to play (Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). These identities can be compatible with, or distinguishable from, the kind of identity a teacher may perform as a colleague, parent, spouse, or friend in contexts outside the teacher role (Gee, 2000; Pennington & Richards, 2016). Professional identity is thus also a performance. Teachers perform their teacher identity in the classroom context in response to their understanding of what it means to be a teacher and to societal expectations of teacher appearance, abilities, and skills (Sachs, 2005). These expectations include those created by their peers, students, other teachers, parents, administrators, and CTs (in the case of PSTs). Therefore, the opportunity to perform the role of the teacher in the classroom before an audience of students during the practicum is a key moment for PSTs in consolidating their professional teacher identity.

PSTs can be supported by their CTs in this process but can also be challenged by them. Rajuan et al. (2008)'s research, for example, showed how CTs can provoke reflection in the PST about values, self, and identity. Situations of support and of challenge in the CT / PST relationship can help the PST distinguish between their personal and professional selves. Exploring the process of negotiation between a CT and PST offers rich possibilities for understanding how future teachers learn to build and consolidate their professional identity.

METHODOLOGY

Research context and research questions

The data used in this article was drawn from the qualitative phase of a mixed-methods research project conducted in the fall of 2019 during the teacher participants' third practicum experience. The focus of this project was on the development of professional identity and efficacy in future teachers. The third practicum was explicitly chosen as a key moment for exploring identity consolidation. It marks the halfway point in PSTs' experience: between previous practica characterized primarily by observation and co-teaching and subsequent ones requiring PSTs to teach more independently. This identity shift from observer to teacher was identified as a challenge to navigate for the PST but also for the CT, who needed to cede control to allow the PST room to learn not just how to teach but also how to *be* a teacher. The present article examines the transition from CT to PST more closely, exploring its negotiation from the point of view of the PST. The guiding research questions were:

1. How can CTs and PSTs negotiate a successful transfer of power from one teacher to another?

2. What effects do the different strategies CTs use in this transition have on the professional identity formation of the PST?

In other words, what steps do the PST and CT need to learn in their dance —their *pas de deux*[1] — in the classroom?

Narrative inquiry

Since teacher identity is multiple, contextually specific, fluid, and constantly created and re-created in interactions between people, narrative inquiry provided the richest opportunity for studying how teachers understand their own experiences. It is in the constant creation and revision of self that narrative has its place, as teachers tell, retell, and revise the stories about how they learn to become teachers. Stories are not just an effective way to understand identity; stories *become* our identities

(Sfard & Prusak, 2005), that is, the ways through which we perceive the world (Swain et al., 2015). For the researcher, listening to PSTs' stories became an act of overhearing their identity as it was being constructed (Polkinghorne, 1988). Since practicum experiences are often sites of tension and transformation for PSTs (Britzman, 2012; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011), studying PSTs' narrating of critical incidents enabled an uncovering of moments of transformation as they were experienced and understood by the PSTs themselves. Using such a methodological approach further allowed us to explore how learning from these critical incidents became assimilated into the PSTs' emerging professional identity.

Narrative analysis vs. analysis of narratives

As Creswell (2008) notes, there are many different approaches to using narrative that fall under the umbrella term of "narrative research." Most narrative researchers employ what Polkinghorne (1995) calls narrative analysis, which is based on "studies whose data consist of actions, events, and happenings" but where "*analysis produces stories* (e.g., biographies, histories, case studies) [emphasis added] (p. 5). My research design used a second, perhaps less familiar approach, which Polkinghorne (1995) described as an analysis of narratives, "that is, studies whose data consist of narratives or stories, but whose analysis *produces paradigmatic typologies or categories* [emphasis added]" (p. 5). The difference between the two lies first in the kinds of data collected and second in the product of the analysis. The former analyzes various data sources to produce a narrative text, while the second type uses uniquely narrative data (anecdotes and narratives told by the participants) to identify themes that "hold across the stories or in taxonomies of types of stories, characters, or settings" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12). My research relied on the second type.

Research design

The research design was largely inspired by Cortazzi's (1993) method, whereby the researcher collects a large number of short stories that are shared among teachers. It is a method grounded in the context of teacher sense-making. Given the potential of Cortazzi's method for generating a large number of stories, the researcher is provided with more substantial evidence of the commonalities across individual experiences, which in turn increases the validity of the findings.

Data collection took place in focus groups, that is, in groups of 4–6 participants answering questions in a group setting, with the important

difference that questions from the interview guide were designed to generate narrative data on a specific question or theme — for example:

> Tell us about a time when you (or your CT) tried to teach something new and things didn't go as planned. What happened? How did you react? How did it make you feel? What did you learn from the experience?

The focus group setting (rather than the one-on-one interview structure) was selected for three main reasons. The first was that narratives require an audience, and the opportunity to tell stories to peers in a group setting echoes the interactions occurring naturally amongst PSTs during their practicum experience. The second reason was that the connections and comparisons participants made as they built upon each other's ideas and experiences provided data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group (Morgan, 1997). The final reason was that during group discussions, ideas suggested by one storyteller helped others recall specific instances and anecdotes in their own lives, which resulted in larger numbers of stories. Generating a larger number of stories can strengthen the validity of research findings, especially when stories told by multiple participants "capture commonalities across individual experiences" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 475).

One limitation of the research (it needs to be noted) is that in their stories, PSTs referenced events with teacher models and mentors that happened before the third practicum experience. These stories, recounted sometimes at a distance of several years, could not be captured as moments of negotiation and identity in the making; they had already become part of a larger narrative about the participants' professional identity. One of the unavoidable aspects of using narrative is that it tends to integrate and make sense of experiences across time, making it challenging to isolate moments within a particular time.

Participants

The qualitative phase of the larger mixed-methods research project was focused on the experiences of 15 pre-service English as a second language (ESL) teachers, all of whom were enrolled in their 3rd year of a 4-year Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) program in a Bachelor of Education degree at two different universities in an urban center in Quebec, Canada. Participants were initially recruited from two university programs via in-class visits and an invitation to participate in an online survey. The participants indicated on the online survey that they were interested in participating in follow-up interviews. These participants were contacted by email and offered a compensation of $10 per session. A

breakdown of the demographics can be found in Table 1, listed by the pseudonym each participant selected.

TABLE 1. *Participant demographics*

Participants [a]	Age	Gender [b]
Addie	21	Female
Beatrice	22	Female
Cassy	21	Female
Finnegan	26	Male
Fouki	33	Male
Izak Zela	21	Male
Johnny Green	22	Male
Keez	21	Female
Kobi	23	Male
Lessya	42	Female
Merida	21	Female
Nick	21	Male
Olivia	38	Female
Ro	27	Female
Subject S	26	Male

[a] Participants are identified by self-selected pseudonyms.

[b] Gender is identified according to participants' self-identification.

Data collection procedures

Data was collected at three different intervals during the practicum experience: at the start of the practicum experience (in early September), midway through the practicum (in October), and after the practicum was completed (in late December). At each 1-hour session (the "story circle"), participants were invited into a conference room, given refreshments, and asked to read through the written instructions and questions for the given session. The researcher was present but remained in the background. Participants were encouraged to read through the questions and identify those that appealed to them, telling stories that related directly or indirectly to the questions.

The data produced during these story circles was audio recorded using the Voice Recorder application on an iPhone, with backup on an iPad. Transcriptions of the story circles from each round were done initially

using the same Voice Recorder app. The researcher checked and revised this transcription manually. A transcript of the resulting story circles was produced on Microsoft Word and later copied into Microsoft Excel for analysis.

Analysis

Data analysis followed Cortazzi's (1993) narrative inquiry approach. In this approach, the researcher collects a large number of very short stories that are shared among teachers. These brief narratives are first identified by their syntax, which is usually "in the past tense (occasionally in present tenses), temporally ordered with respect to each other, and separated by temporal juncture" (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 45). Following Cortazzi's model, the next step is to separate each part of the narrative and code it as one of six parts of Labov's (1972) narrative model: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result, or coda (as cited in Cortazzi, 1993, pp. 44–47).

Once each of these Labovian sections was identified, the evaluation phase of the story was mined, as it is this phase that helps illuminate the meaning of the story — its narrative theme — as it was understood by the person telling it. These themes were then labelled, collated, and condensed through iterative passes through the data. The results of the narrative analysis are discussed next.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Over the course of the six focus group sessions, more than 200 narratives (N = 222) of varying lengths were collected. The narrative analysis resulted in nine overarching themes. A summary of the themes and the number of narratives told in each category are included in Table 2. Of all themes identified, Stories of Being the Teacher had the largest number, with 63 of the 222 stories — or nearly 1 in 3 — being told about moments of identity construction. These stories comprise the focus of this article.

TABLE 2. *Numbers of stories by theme*

Global Themes	Number Told	%
1) Origin Stories	19	8.5%
2) Stories from Teacher Education	10	4.5%
3) Language Identity Stories	10	4.5%
4) Stories of Learning to Manage a Class	23	10%
5) Stories of Learning to Teach a Language	26	13.5%
6) Stories of Evaluation and Feedback	38	17%
7) Stories of Being the Teacher	**63**	**28%**
8) Stories of Conflict, Survival, Leaving, and Resistance	29	13%
Total	222	100%

Shifting identity: Defining who I am and who I am not

Analysis of the Stories of Being the Teacher supports the idea that PSTs test and consolidate their nascent teacher identity when they compare and contrast their beliefs and values with that of their CT (Rajuan et al., 2000). Fifteen of the stories told showed that for these PSTs, the comparison process began during their initial observation phase. As they watched their CT modelling teaching strategies, the PSTs started to identify which skills, strategies, and values they shared with their CT and those which they felt were fundamentally different. In the following story, for example, Fouki describes how this process of comparison and contrast allowed him to incorporate aspects of his CT's strategies into his own teaching style while also integrating essential aspects of his own identity in order to make his teaching identity his own:

> I was mostly singing songs. Well, that's how my CT works, so I had to work with what she had. And, well, I'm a musician, so instead of just pressing play, I just learned all the songs. And that made it way more fun for me, too.

Fouki's story provides a clear illustration of how PSTs can construct their professional identity through this kind of comparison and contrast strategy. In this narrative, Fouki finds a way to work within the CT's prescribed approach, which is "mostly singing songs," and in the process, separate his developing professional identity from that of the CT's by drawing on his own personal identity ("I'm a musician").

The same comparison and contrast strategy is also apparent in the story told by Addie, who, like Fouki, begins by comparing her CT's teaching strategies to her own beliefs about what constitutes good teaching:

> The CT I was with — I liked him a lot. You could tell his classroom worked well. But, he always used the Activity Book or materials that the government provides for the classroom. But that's all he did. It's his ninth or tenth year of teaching, and he still only used the material given to him. Which fine, like we sang a lot and danced in class, like you know the kids have fun, but like, I had a hard time, like ... I don't know, relating *because I don't see myself doing that* [emphasis added]. Like, I don't want to use the songs that the government wants you to sing. Like, *I want to do projects, I want to do arts and crafts, I want to do, like my own activities and see how well I can develop as well and not just use what's given to me* [emphasis added].

For Addie, the comparison and contrast between the CT's identity and her own occurs in a future anticipatory place (Conway, 2001) where, unlike the CT, she will not "just use what's given" but instead can draw on her sense of creativity — an aspect of her core identity — to "do projects ... arts and crafts."

In both of these examples, we can see how the CT / PST mentoring relationship can engender reflection about values, self, and identity when the PST draws upon their personal identities in order to separate their professional teaching identity from that of their CT (Rajuan et al., 2008). The relationship between the CT and PST can provide a critical space for PSTs to define who they are as a teacher through a deliberate reflection about who they are not.

Performing teacher identity for students

A large part of consolidating one's professional teacher identity consists of learning to perform the role of the teacher in a way that is recognized by institutions and culture (Gee, 2000; Pennington & Richards, 2016). During the practicum, PSTs learn not only how to make decisions and use pedagogical approaches that are different from their CTs, but they are also given an opportunity to perform their teacher identity for their primary audience: the classroom students. One of the strategies that PSTs used to establish themselves as *the teacher* is through the act of performing daily classroom routines, such as taking attendance, checking homework, or greeting students at the start of the class, as Subject S expressed:

> In a way, I do my own thing, like, my teacher doesn't really greet the students — like, she greets the students, but she *sits at her desk* [emphasis added]. But *I like greeting my students at the door* [emphasis added]. So that's what I do.

Once again, we see the process of comparison and contrast, this time in the way that the PST consciously chooses to perform the role of the teacher (Sachs, 2006). In this story, the PST performed the role for the students through routines that are generally recognized as what teachers do (Gee, 2000). It also reveals how Subject S managed to distinguish his performance from that of his CT by greeting students at the door rather than from the teacher's desk.

Establishing authority: Introducing the PST

Stepping back and allowing PSTs to perform typical classroom routines for the students is one of the many ways that CTs can make room for the PST to step in and perform their teacher identity. In many of the Stories of Being the Teacher narratives, this process of the CT stepping back and PST stepping forward was achieved successfully: CTs not only granted the PSTs the space to become the teacher in the classroom, but they also strove to establish conditions that supported the PSTs' status and identity as the teacher. The strategies that CTs used in this process varied, but for many, it began in the way they introduced their PST to the class, for instance, as a colleague with equal status rather than as a subordinate, as in this example from Keez:

> My teacher never introduced me as a stagiaire [student teacher]. The students just see me as her helper. Like, they just see me as *another teacher* [emphasis added]. She never said I'm a stagiaire. She just said, "This is Miss Keez, we're working together."

Once the CT had helped to establish the PST's status as the teacher through this kind of strategic introduction, many CTs continued to validate the PST's authority with the classroom students. One way this was accomplished was by endorsing the PSTs' pedagogical and management choices: "If they [the students] are acting out, she doesn't care. She's *always taking my side* [emphasis added]. If I'm getting angry at a student, she's always asking the student, like, 'Yeah, why are you doing that?'" (Keez).

For many CTs, endorsing PSTs' decisions also meant letting the PST make decisions the CT might disagree with:

> My CT, she's quite laid-back. And she's like, "I like when you make decisions." Even if a kid asks me to go to the bathroom, I might say yes. And she's like, "Even though I would've said no, like, I'm never going to intervene, like, 'No, you can't go actually.'" Because, like, *I'm the teacher, right* [emphasis added]? She agrees with the decisions I make, and *she lets me do my thing* [emphasis added]. (Beatrice)

In this story, while the CT disagreed with the PST's decisions, there was negotiation and, most importantly, support for differences in approaches,

which allowed the PST to test out her teaching values and classroom management style. The kind of discussion between CT and PST reflected in Beatrice's story recalls Clarke et al.'s (2014) description of the *invited space*:

> [It is space which] does not mean that everyone has to agree on everything before proposals, policies, or practices can move forward and action is taken. At the very least it assumes that the parties are willing to respectfully attend to each other's perspectives. (p. 188)

According to Clarke et al.'s (2014) estimation, the invited space holds the most potential for a healthy and supportive relationship between PST and CT. From the stories told by the participants, many CTs found their way to this invited space despite a lack of training and support.

Stepping forward, stepping back

Effectively endorsing the PST's status and identity as the teacher in the room not only entails appropriate introductions and explicit support of the PST's pedagogical and managerial decisions, but it also requires that the CT step aside at the appropriate time. The handing over of control over teaching and classroom management is a necessary step in the progression of the practicum and in the consolidation of the PST's teacher identity. For some participating teachers, like Merida, this transition occurred abruptly: "For my Secondary 5s [Grade 11 students], I came in, I met them, and I was teaching them right away. So — I was automatically a teacher." In other situations, such as Nick's, the transition was more gradual:

> At the beginning — I got a really good CT that really modeled and let me have it slowly, and not just 100% ... You know, she let me go at it slowly. I would say that my confidence is pretty high so far ... I think it is only going to increase as I get more used to it.

In the above stories, the decision about when and how the transition took place was successful because the CT was able to assess and match the comfort level of the PST, shifting in response to the PST's needs (Badia & Clarke, 2021). In the first instance, for example, Merida had extensive teaching experience and was ready to begin teaching almost immediately. In the second, Nick came to the practicum with limited experience and greatly appreciated his CT's gradual approach.

Unfortunately, this crucial transition was not always accomplished smoothly. Not all CTs appeared to feel comfortable relinquishing their role as *the teacher*. The tension that developed in the relationship between

the CT and the PST due to difficulties in this essential transition was the subject of 13 of the 63 stories. The following is but one example:

> What she does is she'll do a lesson because she doesn't like letting go [of] control. She'll teach a lesson first period. And she doesn't tell me. And then she comes and sees me during the break. She's like, "I hope you remember (what I taught). You're teaching the next one. Starts in ten minutes." And then I'm like, "What!?" And then she's like, "You have to teach the whole lesson I just did." And I'm like, "Ok …" I was like, "Oh shit!" And then she was like, "I hope you remember, because *this is exactly what you are teaching* [emphasis added]." (Kobi)

In this story, the CT followed the prescribed pattern of stepping forward to model for the PST and stepping back to hand over the classroom, but the CT's expectation that the PST would replicate the lesson rather than teach according to his own style left the PST feeling overwhelmed and undermined. The conflict appeared to stem from a mentorship style that Clarke et al. (2014) have described as *closed*. In this relationship, "the more powerful partner [here the CT] makes decisions with little consultation with the others [here the PST] about the ways in which [the PST] will participate in the relationship" (Clarke et al., 2014, p. 187). Agheshteh and Mehrpur (2021) warn that in situations when PSTs expect to be "active social agents [who] exert their own power agency" and are instead subjected to a prescriptive approach by their CTs, "the power dynamic will lead to teacher resistance" (p. 91), which appears to be precisely what happened in Kobi's relationship with his CT.

Teaching on one's own

Even in the most positive invited relationships between a CT and PST (Clarke et al., 2014), the stories told by the PSTs revealed that it was only truly in the absence of the CT that they felt they could finally step forward to assume the role of the teacher. This finding aligns with research conducted by Benson (2010) and Teng (2019), suggesting that a lack of autonomy and agency can have detrimental effects on PST identity development and that the presence of the CT acts as a restraint on teacher autonomy in much the same way as the strictures of programs act on in-service teachers. Benson (2010), citing Little (1995), argues that if we want teachers to encourage autonomy in their students, we must first be open to negotiating more autonomy for teacher learning and identity consolidation during teacher education programs. This research appears to support Benson's position and extends it to the context of the practicum experience.

The dampening influence of the CT's presence on PST autonomy and identity can be attributed to the power dynamics between CT and PST. As Cassy noted, "They [the CTs] give you feedback, and you don't have a choice but to take it and to try to apply it." The PST's lack of self-confidence partly influences their agency. For example, when the CT was absent, Subject S explained they were less likely to doubt their ability: "When the CT's not in the classroom, I feel more like a teacher. Because I feel like I second-best [*sic*] myself so much more when she's there." Without the (constraining) presence of the CT, the PST feels much more confident to "learn by doing" (Wallace & Brooks, 2015, p. 184), which in turn contributes to consolidating their identity.

Finally, another reason the PSTs sought more autonomy in the classroom was the effect that the CT's absence had on the way the PSTs were able to perform the role of teacher (see Sachs, 2005). When the CT was present in the classroom, the students still saw the CT as the teacher. When the CT was absent, the PSTs felt they could more fully step into the role, as Izak expressed:

> Yesterday my CT wasn't in the school. I taught three periods. *I felt like a teacher* [emphasis added] because, well they were listening to me! But also, when it came to correction, they came to see me — and they were asking like language questions, right? So, to me, being the teacher is being able to answer to these specific questions — and I felt like a teacher!

In Izak's story, it was only in the absence of the CT that the students turned to him to answer their language questions. The absence of the CT allowed the PST the figurative space to step forward and perform his subject matter knowledge and teaching competence for the students (Sachs, 2005). Recognition of one's teaching competence from members of the school community (CT, parents, administrators) is essential. Still, the stories told in this study further revealed that the crucial audience for their performance of teaching competence and consolidation of their teaching identity (for these PSTs) was the students: "Students *know* [emphasis added] the work that I put in all day, and I get finally get to [teach] them. *That's when they actually respect me more*, like actually look up to me as a teacher [emphasis added]" (Addie). Or, as another participant explained: "I just need to see how the *students* [emphasis added] react to [my teaching], because, I mean, it's *them* [emphasis added]. They're the ones that we do this for. Not the supervisors, or the CTs or whatever" (Fouki). In other words, most of the PSTs' learning, testing, and identity consolidation happened in their relationships with the students — something difficult to accomplish unless, while the CT steps back, they can step forward.

CONCLUSION

This article began with the question: What steps should a CT and PST learn in their pas de deux? The stories told by the PSTs in this research revealed that there were key moves in the dance. Before describing them, however, a crucial caveat should be noted: The ideas are based on the PST's point of view, not the CT's. As such, they are not meant to be prescriptive; rather, the following moves are offered here as suggestions in response to a call by Clarke et al. (2014) to recognize and support CTs who are looking for more guidance in understanding how to better mentor their PSTs.

1. Setting the stage, supporting the actor

Strategic introductions are one way in which CTs can set the stage for the PST's transition to becoming *the teacher*. These might be done in several ways, but the key element shared across PST stories was that the CT treated the PST as an equal — as a colleague — especially in front of students.

2. Negotiate the pace of the transition

Whether the transition occurred immediately or gradually, it was important for CTs to communicate expectations about when and how the transition would occur. CTs determined the pace of transition by keeping lines of communication open with their PSTs. Some PSTs came to teaching with a wealth of experience, while others had little and needed more support. Many of the PSTs' stories suggest that one very effective way of beginning the transition was to ask the PST to take over established classroom routines (e.g., greeting students at the door or taking attendance). Classroom routines allowed PSTs to perform the role of the teacher for the students and thus gain recognition and authority through their teacher performance.

3. Supporting PSTs' decisions

No matter the pace of the transition, once the PST had begun to take over teaching, it was essential to allow the PST as much control as possible over how they planned and carried out lessons in the classroom. For the successful relationships in this study, this meant that the CT supported the PST's decisions — even when they did not fully agree with them. This kind of support might be the most challenging aspect of the relationship for the CT to manage. Not only can it be excruciating for a CT to watch a PST teach in a way that runs contrary to the CT's values, but it is also extremely difficult for the CT to set aside the sense of responsibility they feel — and indeed are obligated to provide — for the classroom students' learning (Clarke et al., 2014). The CTs could thus be placed in a position

where they were comparing and contrasting their own identity and approaches with those of the PST. It was a tension that could be felt at the heart of the relationship between the two actors.

4. Being comfortable with leaving

It was perhaps the tension caused by the CT's uncertainty about when to step in and correct the PST and when to step back and support that made it so hard for many CTs in this study to leave the classroom wholly in the hands of the PST. Stories told by the PST clearly indicated that no matter what kind of relationship they had with their CT, it was only in the absence of their CT that they felt they were truly able to exercise their agency and autonomy as teachers.

Supporting CTs and further recommendations

"Teaching is an enormously difficult job that looks easy" (Labaree, 2000, p. 228). Teaching future teachers is doubly so. When a CT welcomes a PST into their classroom, they must find a way to navigate through multiple roles and responsibilities. CTs must learn to find a way to balance their responsibility to the classroom students; they are, first and foremost, "Teachers of Children" (Clarke et al., 2014, p. 190). Their responsibility to the PST is to be a teacher mentor. They must determine how to model effective teaching while allowing room for differences in style and approach. They must learn to be absent from the classroom to allow room for the PSTs to take control, and yet still find ways to be present and give feedback.

The complications may feel, at times, insurmountable, but research has suggested some possible avenues that could help make the transition easier. For example, research done by Darling-Hammond (2012) advocates restructuring teacher education programs to follow a professional development school (PDS) model. In such PDSs, teaching and learning are integrated in a holistic fashion such that the practicum dance between the CT and PST in traditional structures is instead replaced by a space where "teachers are immersed in strong and widely shared cultural norms and practices and can leverage them for greater effect through professional studies offering research, theory, and information about other practices and models" (Darling-Hammond, 2014, p. 553). Other possibilities include taking some of the onus of evaluation and feedback of PSTs away from CTs and returning it to the purview of teacher educators through strategies such as videotaping and expert conferencing (Capizzi et al., 2010; Mena et al., 2016).

Finally, the original project was designed to examine how PSTs build their professional identity during the practicum experience; as a result, the data collected and analyzed told the story of the CT / PST relationship from one point of view only: that of the PST. It did not take into account the experiences and thoughts of the other players: the CTs, supervisors, and university course instructors who played integral roles in creating spaces for the PSTs to experience identity-building throughout their teacher education program. One recommendation for future research would be a more expansive design that can consider multiple players' perspectives in the performance of teacher identity (CTs, supervisors, instructors, classroom students). By providing an enlarged understanding of multiple players' perspectives, we might better understand how to create conditions that support future teachers as well as the CTs who guide them.

NOTES

1. **Pas de deux** (noun)
   1: a dance or figure for two performers
   2: an intricate relationship or activity involving two parties or things
   (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

REFERENCES

Agheshteh, H., & Mehrpur, S. (2021). Teacher autonomy and supervisor authority: Power dynamics in language teacher supervision in Iran. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, *9*(1), 87–106. https://doi.org/10.30466/ijltr.2021.120977

Atay, D. (2007). Beginning teacher efficacy and the practicum in an EFL context. *Teacher Development*, *11*(2), 203–219. https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530701414720

Badia, A., & Clarke, A. (2021). The practicum-mentor identity in the teacher education context. *Teaching Education*, *33*(4), 355–371. https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2021.1920910

Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *39*(2), 175–189. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640902902252

Benson, P. (2010). Teacher education and teacher autonomy: Creating spaces for experimentation in secondary school English language teaching. *Language Teaching Research*, *14*(3), 259–275. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168810365236

Britzman, D. P. (2012). *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach*. SUNY Press.

Capizzi, A. M., Wehby, J. H., & Sandmel, K. N. (2010). Enhancing mentoring of teacher candidates through consultative feedback and self-evaluation of instructional delivery. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, *33*(3), 191–212. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406409360012

Clarke, A., Triggs, V., & Nielsen, W. (2014). Cooperating teacher participation in teacher education: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, *84*(2), 163–202. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654313499618

Coldron, J., & Smith, R. (1999). Active location in teachers' construction of their professional identities. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *31*(6), 711–726. https://doi.org/10.1080/002202799182954

Conway, P. F. (2001). Anticipatory reflection while learning to teach: From a temporally truncated to a temporally distributed model of reflection in teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *17*(1), 89–106. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(00)00040-8

Cortazzi, M. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. The Falmer Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2008). Narrative research designs. In J. W. Creswell (Ed.), *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 511–550). Pearson Education Inc.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2012). Powerful teacher education: Lessons from exemplary programs. John Wiley & Sons.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2014) Strengthening clinical preparation: The holy grail of teacher education. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *89*(4), 547–561, https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2014.939009

Fives, H., Hamman, D., & Olivarez, A. (2007). Does burnout begin with student-teaching? Analyzing efficacy, burnout, and support during the student-teaching semester. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *23*(6), 916–934. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.03.013

Gee, J. P. (2000). Chapter 3: Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of Research in Education*, *25*(1), 99–125. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X025001099

Hong, J. Y. (2010). Pre-service and beginning teachers' professional identity and its relation to dropping out of the profession. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *26*(8), 1530–1543. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.06.003

Ingersoll, R. M., & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, *81*(2), 201–233. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311403323

Labaree, D. F. (2000). On the nature of teaching and teacher education: Difficult practices that look easy. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *51*(3), 228–233. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487100051003011

Labov, W. (1972). Language in the inner city: Studies in the Black English vernacular. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Little, D. (1995). Learning as dialogue: The dependence of learner autonomy on teacher autonomy. *System*, *23*(2), 175–181. https://doi.org/10.1016/0346-251X(95)00006-6

Mena, J., García, M., Clarke, A., & Barkatsas, A. (2016). An analysis of three different approaches to student teacher mentoring and their impact on knowledge generation in practicum settings. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *39*(1), 53–76. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2015.1011269

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Pas de deux. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved April 11, 2024, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pas%20de%20deux

Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research*. SAGE Publications.

Pennington, M. C., & Richards, J. C. (2016). Teacher identity in language teaching: Integrating personal, contextual, and professional factors. *RELC Journal*, *47*(1), 5–23. https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882166312

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *8*(1), 5–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839950080103

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. SUNY Press.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (2007). Validity issues in narrative research. *Qualitative inquiry*, *13*(4), 471–486. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040629767

Rajuan, M., Beijaard, D., & Verloop, N. (2008). Student teachers' perceptions of their mentors as internal triggers for learning. *Teaching Education*, *19*(4), 279–292. https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210802339951

Riches, C., & Parks, P. (2021). Navigating linguistic identities: ESL teaching contexts in Quebec. *TESL Canada Journal*, *38*(1), 28–48. https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v38i1.1367

Sachs, J. (2005). Teacher education and the development of professional identity: Learning to be a teacher. In M. Kompf & P. Denicolo (Eds.), *Connecting policy and practice: Challenges for teaching and learning in schools and universities* (pp. 5–21). Routledge.

Saldaña, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Sfard, A., & Prusak, A. (2005). Telling identities: In search of an analytic tool for investigating learning as a culturally shaped activity. *Educational Researcher*, *34*(4), 14–22. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X034004014

Steinbach, M., & Kazarloga, V. (2014). Square-headed frogs and world citizens: Attitudes and identities of ESL teacher candidates in Québec. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, *13*(5), 319–334. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2014.958038

Swain, M., Kinnear, P., & Steinman, L. (2015). *Sociocultural theory in second language education: An introduction through narratives* (2nd ed.). Multilingual Matters

Teng, F. (2019). Understanding teacher autonomy, teacher agency, and teacher identity: Voices from four EFL student teachers. *English Teaching & Learning*, *43*(2), 189–212. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42321-019-00024-3

Thomas, L. (2017). Learning to learn about the practicum: A self-study of learning to support student learning in the field. *Studying Teacher Education*, *13*(2), 165–178. https://doi.org/10.1080/17425964.2017.1342354

Thomas, L., & Beauchamp, C. (2011). Understanding new teachers' professional identities through metaphor. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *27*(4), 762–769. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.12.007

Volkmann, M. J., & Anderson, M. A. (1998). Creating professional identity: Dilemmas and metaphors of a first-year chemistry teacher. *Science Education*, *82*(3), 293–310. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1098-237X(199806)82:3<293::AID-SCE1>3.0.CO;2-7

Wallace, C. S., & Brooks, L. (2015). Learning to teach elementary science in an experiential, informal context: Culture, learning, and identity. *Science Education*, *99*(1), 174–198. https://doi.org/10.1002/sce.21138

PHILIPPA PARKS is an assistant professor and program director for the Bachelor of Education in Teaching English as a Second Language (BEALS) degree in the Faculty of Education at the Université de Sherbrooke, Quebec. Her research looks at how language teachers form their professional identity during teacher education, particularly how they build self-efficacy and resilience, and how teacher education programs can help address teacher shortages across Canada. philippa.parks@usherbrooke.ca

PHILIPPA PARKS est professeure adjointe et directrice de programme pour le baccalauréat en enseignement de l'anglais langue seconde (BEALS) à la faculté d'éducation de l'Université de Sherbrooke, au Québec. Ses recherches portent sur la façon dont les enseignants de langues forment leur identité professionnelle au cours de leur formation, en particulier sur la façon dont ils développent leur auto-efficacité et leur résilience, et sur la façon dont les programmes de formation des enseignants peuvent contribuer à remédier à la pénurie d'enseignants au Canada. philippa.parks@usherbrooke.ca