

Enhancing Professional Development School Teacher Educators' Professional Vision for Discourse-based Pedagogy

[blinded for review]

Purpose and Theoretical Perspectives

Small-group, text-based discussion—when marked with extended episodes of student talk—stands out as an effective tool for promoting students' critical-analytic thinking (Abrami et al., 2008, 2015). The challenge, however, is that enacting such discussion-based pedagogy often requires a shift in how educators conceptualize and facilitate talk in their classrooms. In the PDS that is the context of this study, we believe that participating in initial and ongoing professional development should be a part of the role of teacher educators. Engaging in professional development and then practicing text-based discussions in methods classes bolsters teacher educators' (TEs') professional vision (Goodwin, 1994; Grossman et al, 2009) for discourse-based pedagogy and subsequently, stands to improve teacher candidates' emergent classroom pedagogy.

Professional vision refers to “socially organized ways of seeing and understanding events that are answerable to the distinctive interests of a particular social group” (Goodwin, 1994, p. 606). Thus, fostering educators' professional vision for talk enables them to perceive classroom discussions in new ways, including the ability to analyze discourse patterns for indicators of productive talk and subsequently facilitate more productive student exchanges. We contend that professional vision is influenced by educators' discourse-specific pedagogical knowledge (Magnusson et al., 1999); for example, their understanding of instructional framing, teacher and student roles, and how talk can be used as a tool for thinking and interthinking. In this paper, we specifically consider professional vision for discourse-based pedagogy as ways that PDS TEs

perceive and codify meaningful patterns within classroom discourse in order to guide and promote richer classroom discussions.

This work is situated within the Quality Talk model (Authors, 2017). Quality Talk (QT) is a small-group, teacher-facilitated discussion approach that has been shown to increase teachers' discussion-based pedagogical content knowledge as well as foster students' reasoning and content-area learning (Authors, 2018). We draw on two years of TEs' work to facilitate QT discussions in PDS methods classes and to teach PDS teacher candidates to enact discussion-intensive pedagogy in their elementary school clinical internships (see Figure 1). We aim to better understand TEs' experience of becoming more skillful facilitators, and their stance toward talk as a tool for critical-analytic thinking. In this analysis, we focus on one PDS TE who facilitated discourse-rich discussions during methods coursework and examine the ways she thinks about and uses talk as a tool for thinking along three dimensions: elements of talk, stance toward discourse pedagogy, and roles of facilitators and students, across two years. We ask: *How does this teacher educator develop and enact her professional vision for discourse-based pedagogy in a PDS?* Together, these dimensions illuminate key themes in her emergent professional vision, as we describe next. This allows us to bring the scholarship on discourse in line with the scholarship about teacher educator learning, specifically in the context of a PDS.

Research Methods

Quality Talk for Teacher Education

In the fall semesters of 2019 and 2020, PDS TEs adapted and enacted the Quality Talk intervention in a teacher preparation setting. PDS school- and university-based TEs worked with QT staff to co-develop and integrate five QT discourse lessons and related discussions into a course known as *Classroom Learning Environments* (CLE), which is designed to prepare teacher

candidates to create and sustain classroom learning communities through reflection, professional dialoguing skills, and teacher research. All QT lessons were video recorded and all written documentation used to prepare for, facilitate, and reflect on the lessons were collected and transcribed. All facilitators participated in initial professional development, semi-structured interviews about their discourse pedagogy at the beginning and end of each semester, participated in coaching. Additionally, they completed written reflections after each discussion they facilitated. All discussions and interviews in Year 2 were facilitated using video conferencing tools, following similar norms and protocols as in Year 1.

Data Collection and Analysis

Members of the PDS and QT researchers collaborated to analyze cases of TEs in CLE. The strength of the case study method is to deeply examine one or more cases within natural contexts (Yin, 2018) and allows us to engage in participatory action research (McIntyre, 2007) alongside our commitment to practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) with the TEs and other PDS stakeholders. TEs from the first years of the project are conducting the analysis together with the vision to continue to improve their practice.

We analyzed the TEs' reflection logs and interviews to try to characterize teacher educators' professional vision at different timepoints. We selected the focal case because this TE participated across the first two years of the study and was the most novice of the TEs in Year 1, allowing for substantial professional development across the first two years. Building on the discourse literature, we were interested in the TE's stance toward text, her beliefs about TE' and students' roles during discussion, and her conceptualization of talk as an indicator of teacher candidates' (TCs') thinking. Stance refers to the TE's and TCs' purpose for discussion. For example, an efferent stance encourages students to focus on gaining and retrieving knowledge,

an expressive stance encourages students to consider their emotional response to a text or experience, and finally, a critical-analytic stance encourages students to question the underlying assumptions of a text or experience (Authors et al., 2017). We also analyzed the data for indications of the TE's perceptions of teachers' and TCs' roles during discussion. For example, the TE's perceptions regarding what they were responsible for during discussion and what the TCs were responsible for (e.g., Who controls the topic? The turns? Who has interpretive authority?). Finally, we analyzed the data for evidence of the TE's perceptions of talk as a tool for thinking and interthinking. For instance, we examined her understanding of TCs' questions and responses, and what they communicated about students' cognition, and further, her perceptions of how discourse tools, such as prompting, challenging, and marking can be used to facilitate productive discussions.

Case Study Results

Theme 1: From *Sharing and Clarifying* to *Thinking and Challenging*

In Year 1, the TE, "Daisy," was a novice teacher educator, in her first year of a Ph.D. program, and was new to the US context of schooling, although she had previously taught at the high school level outside of the US. In Interview 1 of the first year of the study, Daisy described her belief that supporting the contributions of many voices in discussion enables the process of "clarifying," or making sense of, both your own and others' experiences. Daisy described the role of discussion in CLE in the following way:

I think the purpose is to make sure we have everyone's voice here and then they can clarify their own understanding through sharing with peers...They can get more perspective through the discussion as a whole group. So they will be able to take in and to contribute to the class. (August interview 2019, lines 152 - 156)

Daisy felt it was important to facilitate openness, safety, and diversity of perspectives in talk. She wanted to know “that everyone feels safe and feel[s] okay about everything” and that “all...kinds of ideas are welcome” (Aug. Year 1, lines 847-849). A marker of a good discussion was that students felt “safe to just share anything they want [about a recent classroom observation]. So, I think by gathering this knowledge we form a more complete understanding of the classroom” (August Year 1, lines 377-381).

When prompted to reflect on a particular discussion, Daisy explained that a strength of the discussion was that it supported connections between the readings and particular course members: “I think the reason [the discussion was successful] is we make a strong connection to ourselves first and then we connect it to the readings we have. So we interpret the reading based on our experience, but not based on some abstract ideas” [August Year 1, lines 639-642]. Specifically, she positioned the purpose of discussion in the following ways: (1) a space for all voices to be present and (2) a space in which teacher candidates clarify their own understanding through processes of sharing and listening.

In Year 2, however, Daisy’s response reflected discussion as a “time and as space...intentionally created for participants to think out loud and to listen to each other’s ideas and then build on each other or challenge each other’s thoughts” (Dec. Year 2, lines 87-89). Across both years, rather than general openness, she began to focus on connections between field experiences and the content of the course, explaining, “If we want to make sense of what we learn and what we experience in our internship classrooms, it is important to narrate our experiences and think aloud what happened and how we thought it happened” (Dec. Year 1, response 1_10). In reflections, Daisy wrote that coaching from the project helped her to reflect on her role in the discussion, shifting her primary focus from listening to TCs to supporting them

to listen and critically respond to one another. Daisy's commitment to general safety and openness became enmeshed with her focus on deliberately supporting TCs' connections between PDS clinical field experiences and the content of CLE.

Theme 2: Recognizing and Using Discourse Features

Across both years, Daisy participated in reflection and coaching, analyzing talk from video-recorded segments of her discussions. In written reflections, she drew on the utility of particular discourse elements. As she learned to characterize and name particular features of discourse, she often recognized their value for practice. For example, she emphasized the importance of using uptake questions, a kind of question that reflects back to something that another person has said earlier in the discussion: "It seems that an uptake question has the potential to lead us to a richer and broader understanding of classroom practice." As she continued to build her repertoire of discourse moves, Daisy emphasized the importance of teacher candidates' knowledge of the components of an argument as important to discussion: "Some interns said that they think knowing the components of a statement (claim, evidence, and reasons) really helped them to respond." Finally, as Daisy learned about how to better facilitate the discussions using "teacher moves," she emphasized how they were effective to generate more questions and extend the duration of a discussion. In terms of professional vision, Daisy's knowledge of talk features mediated her ways of seeing the meaningful contributions to talk within the complex sensory field of facilitating a discussion.

Significance

How did Daisy develop and enact her professional vision for discourse-based pedagogy in the PDS? We characterized Daisy's stance toward discourse in the beginning of Year 1 as highly expressive and minimally critical-analytic. At that time, she understood her role as to

provide space for all students to voice their ideas so that talk can be used as a tool for sharing, connecting, and clarifying understandings. She desired for discussion to support connections for PDS teacher candidates between methods content and clinical field experiences, but struggled to make these connections.

Across Years 1 and 2, Daisy exhibited substantial growth in her ability to recognize features of talk and of argument and increasingly discussed the generativity of specific features of talk. Specifically, Daisy began to see argument, including supporting teacher candidates to be critically responsive to others' arguments, as essential for learning through talk. Our analysis illuminates the shift from thinking about discussion as primarily a tool for creating space for all voices, to a critical-analytic stance in which talk is a tool for thinking together and productively challenging others.

Furthermore, our analysis illustrates how the PDS's emphasis on TE professional learning supported professional vision for discourse pedagogy. In this case, PD and coaching using video segments of recent discussions supported her to attend to and label patterns in talk by coding particular discourse features, thereby perceiving and codifying meaningful patterns within classroom discourse in order to guide and promote richer classroom discussions in PDS classrooms. Our results stand to impact how the field conceptualizes ways that PDS partnerships can support TEs' growth in supporting discourse-based pedagogy as a context for critical analytic thinking about practice.

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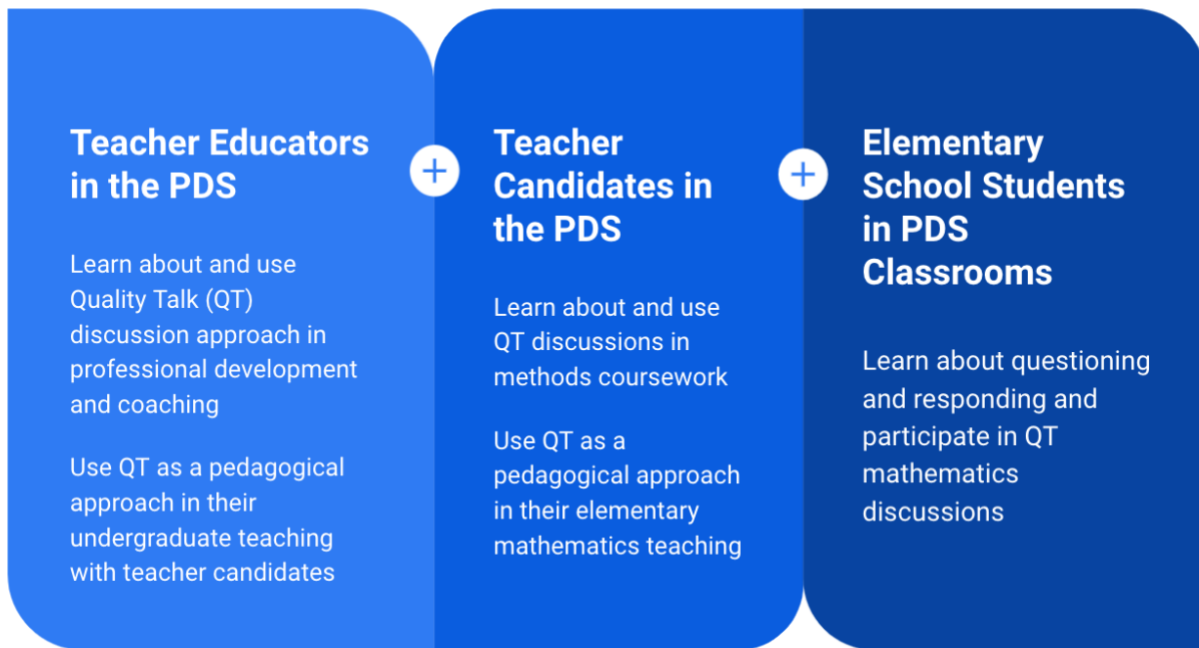


Figure 1. The Quality Talk Teacher Education project impacts Teacher Educators, Teacher Candidates, and Elementary School Students