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Cheri Chan

School-University
Partnerships in
English Language
Teacher Education
Tensions, Complexities,
and the Politics of
Collaboration



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School-University Partnerships in English Language Teacher Education

Tensions, Complexities, and the Politics
of Collaboration

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Cheri Chan
Faculty of Education
University of Hong Kong
Hong Kong
Hong Kong

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For Ian

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Abbreviations

ACTEQ	Advisory Committee for Teacher Education and Qualification (HK)
CAR	Collaborative Action Research
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CPD	Continual Professional Development
EDB	Education Bureau (HK)
HK	Hong Kong
HKEAA	Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
NSSC	New Senior Secondary Curriculum
PD	Professional Development
QEF	Quality Education Fund (HK)
SBA	School-based Assessment

Chapter 1

Introduction: School–University Partnerships for Teacher Education

Introduction

Collaboration in its simplest sense means cooperation. In the context of education, it can refer to a teacher cooperating with students, colleagues or other professionals in the community, including university educators. Beyond the basic definition, collaboration as a concept evokes considerable promise. As a social practice, it has a way of foregrounding itself as being democratic, reciprocal, sustainable and mutually beneficial. For example, the notion of building relations with ‘a partner’ to share knowledge is central to all practices of collaboration. To take a case in point, collaborative models of professional development often draw on the learning theories of Wenger’s (1998) community of practice and Dewey’s (1910) notion of constructivism and reflective inquiry. One of the central conditions for Dewey’s notion of inquiry is the deepening of understanding of a problem or situation through active participation in communities of committed practice to achieve shared goals. Therefore, we can see why collaboration is advocated as a learning model for teachers in contemporary sociocultural contexts because it is seen to promote professional growth, critical thinking, reflection and renewal. From this perspective, collaboration is no longer a choice, but an expectation of the teachers. To illustrate, collaboration is so prominently featured in many government documents, such as professional standards for teachers, that collegiality and collaboration have become common performance indicators to measure teacher effectiveness. Indeed, collaboration is so entrenched into contemporary discourses of teacher education and professional performativity; it has evolved to mean something much more complex, abstract and multifaceted than its original definition. For example, ‘cooperation’ is not used in the communities of practice (Wenger 1998) discourse because its practitioners would argue that their understanding of collaboration is more holistic and empowering. So while there has to be elements of cooperation in collaboration, collaboration can mean much more than cooperation. So, now is perhaps a timely juncture to examine how different contemporary understandings of collaboration

are constructed in different educational landscapes, and more importantly, how these representations of collaboration play a role in shaping and re-shaping teachers' professional identities. I have noted that much of the literature on collaboration has focused on why teachers should learn together, but fewer studies have theorised collaboration as a social practice. So, a main objective of this book is to problematise the different discursive constructions of collaboration as a way of extending the current conceptualisations of collaboration in teacher education research.

Unpacking the Discourse of Collaboration

This book borrows the critical discourse analytical tools from social and critical theorists such as Foucault (1991) and Fairclough (2003) to unpack how particular worldviews about collaboration are negotiated, managed and contested in the context of professional development practices for teachers. Discourse, according to Gee (2005), is never neutral and it is always connected to identity and the distribution of social goods. In Chap. 3, I examine how the different meanings of collaboration in teacher education literature are constructed as part of a genealogical history of the present. I do this by drawing on the Foucauldian notion of genealogy to trace the different discursive representations and meanings of collaboration presented in teacher education literature from the past to present. So, examining collaborative practices through a critical lens is a key focus in this book. Collaboration, as a structure, is unravelled like a spool so that we can interrogate each 'layer' more closely to understand why different tropes or 'story lines' of collaboration are privileged in different sociocultural contexts, conditions and time. It is important to examine discourse in context because discourse is shaped by relations of power and invested with ideologies (Fairclough 1995, 2003; Foucault 1978). In other words, discourse sets the parameters of what can be said and not said about how teaching professionals should learn in a given context. Furthermore, there is a growing body of research which suggests that teacher education reforms in the twenty-first century have been strongly influenced by globalisation, managerial and neo-liberal discourses, and these reform discourses have privileged particular conceptions of 'professionalism' (Ball 2003; Bourke et al. 2013; Day and Sachs 2004). It seems there is now more government intervention in deciding how teachers should learn than ever before. An example of this is the increased use of teacher competency frameworks or professional standards set by teaching councils to govern the professional development of teachers and what constitutes as quality and effective professional learning (e.g. collaborative learning is presented as being more desirable than teachers learning alone). However, the increased government intervention to standardise teacher education on a global scale in recent years has

meant that professional development is no longer a choice but an expectation of all teaching professionals (Bourke et al. 2013; Day and Sachs 2004).

More specifically, this book examines critically how teachers in one sociocultural context are enacting the discourses of professional development. Using case study as an approach, I examine how a community of English language educators enacted, negotiated and contested discourses of collaboration in the context of a school–university partnership collaborative action research project. In particular, I examine the discourses collaboration as ‘tropes’ or narratives of professional development to find out how the educators made sense of them in the context of curriculum reform (at the time, an emphasis was placed on teacher educators to ‘rethink’ how we can make professional development experiences more meaningful and relevant for teachers to help them implement new teaching and assessment practices in English language classrooms). I believe that examining collaboration from a discursive perspective can help educators understand how discourses offer particular kinds of subject positions and identities through which they come to view their relationships with different loci of power in context (Day and Sachs 2004, p. 5). This critical approach contributes to the current debate on school–university partnership because it helps educators understand why professional collaboration is sometimes difficult to achieve.

My Experiences of Collaboration

My first memories of collaboration was co-planning and co-teaching with my mentors at the two practicum schools in the UK, where I trained as a teacher in 1998–1999. In my first practicum school, I was placed in a school near Stoke-on-Trent where there was a lot of learner diversity. I remember feeling very nervous on my first day, uncertain what was expected of me. I was delighted when my mentor said we could work together and co-teach in the first two weeks. Her invitation to collaborate was appreciated and I was very grateful for her support. However, I also remember feeling hesitant about making teaching decisions on my own because I was aware of my ‘guest’ status as a student–teacher in the school. Even though it was a very positive collaboration experience in many ways, the experience made me aware of the power differential between collaborators and how this difference shaped the negotiation of identities and social relations for example. This early experience of collaboration sparked my interest to examine how professionals work together in a given social context. After completing the PGDE programme, I returned to Hong Kong to teach. As a teacher, I participated in a mentoring programme to support pre-service teachers placed for the whole English department to learn together. In 2006, I became a teacher educator at university and became actively involved in different school–university partnership projects, mainly to provide professional development support for schools in the community. So, my

research on school–university collaboration was motivated by own collaboration experiences first as a student–teacher, then as school and university educator.

From my experiences of collaboration in the different social contexts, I have observed that while there are many benefits for educators who collaborate, authentic collaboration is not easy to achieve. What I mean by authentic collaboration is the type of equitable, empowering and mutually reciprocal practice advocated in teacher education literature. In my practice, I have found at least three main challenges. The first is negotiating shared and equal ownership of a partnership project within and across institutional cultural settings can be highly problematic. For example, I experienced challenges in establishing an equitable working relationship with partners when I was collaborating in the capacity of a teacher educator with school teachers. Second, there are different layers of complexities and tensions in negotiating identities in context, and these are expounded when collaborators come from different cultural and institutional settings. Third, I also observed how identities, beliefs and social relations are managed within a collaborative project may be strongly influenced by factors in the broader sociocultural context. To put it in another way, external factors such as the perceived roles and different social status of teachers and teacher educators within a community will have an impact on how identities are negotiated within a partnership. As Groundwater-Smith et al. (2013, pp. 1–2) observed, the “dilemmas, tensions and contradictions” faced by practitioners in partnership research projects are often exacerbated by a dominant model of professional practice that positions schools to be a “domain of problems” and academia to be a “domain of solutions”. This transactional understanding of partnership, where one group (academia) is seen as the provider of the resources and expertise to another group (schools), is not conducive to the construction of a reciprocal, sustainable and transformative partnership (Groundwater-Smith et al. 2013). An example of a transactional school–university partnership is consultancy projects where schools pay university educators to organise professional development activities for teachers. This practice of transactional partnership is common in places where there is extensive curriculum reform. So negotiating a collaborative practice based on the principles of equity, empowerment and mutual reciprocity may not be easily achieved in such educational contexts.

The Case Study

The study of collaboration discussed in this book is from the context of Hong Kong; so, I would like to provide some background information to help readers understand the significance of examining collaboration practices in this particular social context. Since the turn of the century, and like many other countries in the Asia-pacific region, Hong Kong has been shifting towards a professional development policy shaped predominantly by the performativity and neo-liberal managerial discourses, which encourage compliance with government policies and standards (Ball 2003; Bourke et al. 2013). In 2003, a document published by the

Hong Kong SAR Government entitled ‘Towards a Learning Profession’, set guidelines on how teachers should learn as professionals (ACTEQ 2003). The document has played a significant role in regulating how teachers learn in Hong Kong for the past ten years including the number of hours teachers should spend on professional development activities each year. This document has become the driving force determining how teachers should develop and laid the foundation stones for the Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals (COTAP), which was formed in 2013. Unlike Australia, the UK and the US, Hong Kong has yet to develop a set of professional standards for teachers, but this will change soon because one of COTAP’s goals is to create a new set of competency framework to measure and regulate in-service teachers’ standard of professionalism. If we examine closely the discourses of policy documents shaping teaching standards and teacher professional development practices, we can see terms such as ‘school–university partnership’ and ‘networking’ appearing frequently, packaged as learning opportunities for academia to forge links with community partners to improve education. To take an example, COTAP is developing what it calls a ‘T-excel’ (T stands for Teacher) a one-stop online portal system to regulate in-service teachers’ professional development (COTAP 2015). There are eight domains in the online T-excel system (*T-standard*, *T-dataset*, *T-train*, *T-surf*, *T-craft*, *T-share*, *T-applause*, *T-bridge*). The ‘T-standard’ will be a unified set of standards for Hong Kong’s teaching profession and the ‘T-share’ will reinforce collaboration among teachers through the formation of learning communities and professional networks. The justification provided by COTAP for the new policy on teacher development is to ensure that Hong Kong’s teaching profession meets global standards of professionalism.

Furthermore, in the past decade, curriculum reforms in schools in China and Hong Kong have led to more school–university collaborative research projects as a way for educators to understand more about classroom practices (Tinker-Sachs 2002; Wang and Mu 2013). School–university collaboration has been widely promulgated as a social practice which can help teachers understand and investigate problems brought about by curriculum change. Although there has been a growth in the number of research papers reporting on school–university collaborative experiences in China and Hong Kong, these papers tend to highlight the positive aspects of the collaboration process and downplay the challenges of negotiating equity and identities. In addition, the contexts of many larger studies about school–university collaboration are based on practices and research from the United States, United Kingdom and Australia. So, there is a gap in the literature. Thus, Hong Kong, as a region of China, presents itself as an interesting sociocultural setting for examining collaboration through a critical lens. Hong Kong, as a case, can contribute to the field by providing some rich insights to help educators make sense of collaboration policies and practices in their own educational contexts.

I will now provide more background about the school–university partnership project discussed in Chaps. 4–6. The data from the case study examine how school teachers and university researchers discursively constructed and contested practices of collaboration within the context of a large-scale two year capacity building

school–university collaborative action research project (CAR project hereafter) in English language education set during a key period of assessment reform (HKEAA 2007). The CAR project was initiated by a team of English language teacher educators in an English medium university in Hong Kong to build English language teachers’ knowledge and skills to respond to changes in assessment practices that were being implemented at the time. I was a member of the university team and acted as a facilitator in the CAR project. The ‘stories’ of collaboration in this book draw on the experiences of the facilitators and teachers who I collaborated with during the CAR project. In this book, school–university collaboration is examined as a social practice at three different, but inter-related levels and contexts: the personal, the institutional and the sociocultural (Fairclough 2003). As I have mentioned earlier, education institutions including schools and universities have been a major focus of government policing and reform and collaborative practices are thus ‘political projects’ which have become part and parcel of the reform movement in education (Popkewitz and Brennan 1998). So, the study featured in this book aim to address the following questions:

- (1) What discourses are operative in school–university collaboration in the sociocultural context of Hong Kong?
- (2) How are beliefs, interpersonal relations and identity negotiated in collaborative action research?
- (3) What tensions and complexities operate in collaborative action research discourse in an educational context?
- (4) Given the above factors and influences, to what extent can school–university collaboration be ‘achieved’?

The duration of the CAR project was two years and the following were its key features:

- The core participants were university educators and secondary school English language teachers;
- The project manager and a team of research assistants were recruited as a support team for the school teachers and university researchers;
- There were five action research sub-groups. Autonomy for teachers to select their own research sub-group was foregrounded in the project discourse. Teachers from the same school collaborated in the action research project as co-researchers;
- At least two university researchers acted as facilitators for each sub-group of teachers;
- Four action research forums were organised for all the teachers and researchers to meet; and
- The university researchers visited the teachers in their schools during the action research cycles. Meetings focused on discussing the progress of the action research project.

The project was collaborative in nature in that it positioned the university teacher educators as research facilitators whose key role was to work with the teachers to

enable them to implement their own school-based action research projects around the common goals of improving assessment practices in the English language curriculum. More specifically, the CAR facilitators were positioned in the project as ‘supporters’ to ‘guide’ the teachers through the action research process and it was made very clear to the teachers at the beginning that they would have ownership of their project in terms of research focus and design of data collection tools. For example, the facilitators in the sub-groups met with the teachers before and after the action research cycles to help them plan the action research interventions. The facilitators also visited the teachers in their schools during the action research cycles. In these face-to-face meetings, teachers and facilitators exchanged professional information about the action research projects. For example, the teachers reported on the progress of their action research and the facilitators helped teachers ‘troubleshoot’ any problems arising from the research. So, the data collected from the HK CAR project provided me with an opportunity to examine the core project team’s beliefs about collaboration and also to reflect on my own practices as a collaborator. I believe that this space for critical self-reflection is valuable for both professional growth and for understanding the complexities in negotiating and managing inter-institutional collaboration practices.

Data Collection

Discursive data (emails, interviews and transcripts of meetings) were collected during the key collaborative phases of the CAR project. All the data were produced in English. In the context of Hong Kong, it is common practice for ESL teachers to conduct meetings and write emails in English because it is one of the official languages. The teachers in this case study were highly proficient speakers and writers of English. The collaboration with the teachers lasted for one school year. In my CAR project team, there were two university teacher educators acting as facilitators from a university in Hong Kong (Anna and myself) and two Hong Kong English Language teachers from Green Hill Secondary School (Carol and Jennifer). There was also one other team member, the project manager (Katy), who provided direct technical or administrative support to the facilitators and teachers in each action research team. The collaboration experience of these five members will be discussed in detail in Chaps. 4–6. Ethical clearance was granted by the University to conduct the research. Permission and ethical consent letters were sent to the teachers and the facilitators of the CAR project team before the start of the data collection process. Table 1.1 provides some brief background information about the five participants in the HK case study.

Anna and I were the two primary facilitators working with the teachers from Green Hill Secondary School in the CAR project, but since then Katy also provided additional support to us during the collaboration experience. For example, emails sent between the two facilitators and the teachers were often copied to Katy for reference so she knew when we were meeting the teachers and how often the

Table 1.1 The educators in the CAR project case study

Cheri, CAR facilitator (the author)	Cheri is a teacher educator who works in the Faculty of Education in a university in Hong Kong. Prior to joining the Faculty in 2006, she worked as an English teacher and has served as a panel chairperson. At the time of the project, Cheri was interested in how the teachers in schools were making sense of the curriculum reform in assessment practices and was invited to be a co-facilitator in the CAR project because of her interest in collaboration with schools
Anna, CAR facilitator	British–Australian English language teacher educator, who at the time of the project, was living and working in Hong Kong. Anna was particularly interested in researching teacher feedback in assessment for learning. Anna was the lead facilitator in the CAR project. Anna and I had worked together before the CAR for the school-university partnership team so we volunteered to co-facilitate the project related to the topic of feedback. This was Anna’s first experience of facilitating a collaborative action research and she was keen to work with me because I had some previous experience of facilitating action research. Anna and I acted as co-facilitators, but Anna was positioned as the principal facilitator because feedback was her area of expertise. From the teachers’ perspective, they always met Anna and I together. Anna always sent the emails to the teachers, but the emails were often co-constructed by both of us
Jennifer, English language teacher	Jennifer is Hong Kong–Chinese. At the time of the CAR project, Jennifer had been teaching at Green Hill Secondary for four years. She majored in linguistics and was in the process of studying for a Master degree in education at a university when we met in 2006. She was interested in learning more about feedback and assessment for learning strategies because of the implementation of the new English Language curriculum in Hong Kong. English Language was the first core subject to have a school-based assessment (SBA) component, so Jennifer felt it was important to learn more about SBA practices by joining different collaborative projects with universities. Jennifer had some experience of collaborative action research; she had previously participated in a school–university project with another university
Carol, English language teacher	Carol is Hong Kong–Chinese. Carol was the school-based assessment coordinator at Greenhill Secondary School at the time of the study. She was teaching several secondary 2 classes. It was Carol’s fourth year teaching at the school, but she had been teaching English language for more than 10 years before joining the school. Carol did not major in English Language teaching when she was an undergraduate student so she did a post graduate diploma in education (PGDE English Major) at a university after she started teaching. She had no previous training in giving feedback to students in an assessment for learning context. One of Carol’s role as the SBA coordinator was to organise professional development activities for other English teachers. It was her role to direct how the school can improve SBA practices and to provide sample teaching materials, resources including sample SBA tasks for the teachers. With the introduction of the New Senior

(continued)

Table 1.1 (continued)

	Secondary Curriculum (NSSC) in Hong Kong schools, Carol felt she had to help teachers make some significant changes in the way they teach English language in the junior forms at Green Hill Secondary. This was her key motivation for joining the project. Carol had no previous experience of doing action research
Katy, project manager	Katy is Hong Kong–Chinese. She was the manager of the CAR project. Katy is a trained teacher and educational researcher. In the CAR project, Katy was responsible for communicating with the teachers and principals from the schools. She provided technical and administrative support to our team

meetings took place in the school or at the university. I did facilitate other action research projects in the CAR project, but the reason why I chose to study the collaborative experience with Green Hill Secondary School as a case was because our collaboration with this School was widely perceived by the CAR project team members as ‘successful’ because both Carol and Jennifer seemed highly committed and were very engaged in doing the school-based action research. For example, both Jennifer and Carol participated in the teacher conference at the end of the project and shared their CAR experience with other teachers. During the collaboration process, Jennifer and Carol maintained active communication with the facilitators, often seeking advice or practical support for their action research project. In many ways, I thought it would be much more interesting and useful to critically examine what appeared to have been a ‘successful’ collaboration experience because of the complexities of collaboration as a social practice as discussed earlier in this chapter. The objective is to do what Gregory (2004, p. 2) proposes as the purpose of a critical approach and that is to examine “not the spaces but the spacings”—what is said and not said about the collaboration practice in the case study.

The Research Principles

In Chap. 2, I provide a detailed explanation of the research theories and methodological framework I used to interrogate the discourses of collaboration in teacher education. This section simply provides a brief overview of the key ideas as a way of introducing the reader to the key theoretical principles underpinning this book.

The point of the study was to examine how our ways of thinking about collaborative practices are not simply acquired, but are discursively negotiated (Fairclough 1995; Foucault 1971, 1972; Locke 2004; Mills 1997). The focus was to analyse how and why collaboration was constructed as a progressive practice of professional development for teachers in the contemporary Hong Kong context using a CDA research framework. I felt this methodological approach was appropriate for my study because CDA views the systematic analysis and interpretation of texts as potentially revelatory of ways in which discourses consolidate power and

shape social practices (Fairclough 1995; Locke 2004). Fairclough (1995, p. 132) had described CDA as aiming:

to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power.

Using CDA, the comfortable certainties and totalizing conclusions privileging some of the discourses of collaboration can be rendered visible and hence interrogated and contested (Foucault 1978, 1991). Moreover, interrogating the discourses of collaboration in the context of educational change provides a space for researchers to look at social practices differently as a way to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs regulating teacher learning in teacher education discourse and respond to the inevitable tensions and complexities in negotiating school–university partnership. So, this research framework provided a critical space to problematise issues of power, tensions and complexities arising from collaboration practices. In this way, I can examine how and why the discourses of collaboration constitute or contest particular educational ideologies in the context of social change (Foucault 1978; Walshaw 2007). In the context of this study, the aforementioned research questions aimed to address what power/knowledge relations were produced through the system of reasoning deployed in collaborative practices in the Hong Kong sociocultural context and how teachers and researchers as subjects were constituted in power relations in these discourses in the case study. Thus, in the context of collaboration, this means interrogating the ‘order of discourse’ that is regulating collaboration as a social practice and what knowledge is included and excluded in this discourse (Mills 1997; Mills 2003; Walshaw 2007). How I interrogate the discourses of collaboration will be discussed further in Chap. 2.

Organisation of the Book

This chapter provides an introduction to the book. I have provided an overview of the school–university collaborative action research case study and the main characters in ‘stories of collaboration’ that I will share in Chaps. 4–6. I have introduced the overarching themes and research questions to be addressed and why it is important for both teachers and teacher educators to problematise professional development practices in the context of education reform. I have introduced some of the key concepts and principles underpinning the theoretical framework for the study and have explained why I draw on social and critical theories to examine collaboration in the context of professional development practices for teachers. In Chaps. 2 and 3, I will critically evaluate some of the major *tropes* (the narrative story lines) of school–university collaboration that have been presented in teacher education literature from the past to present. I will also provide a discussion of key

international research studies on collaboration as well as examining studies and policies that have shaped collaboration practices in the context of Hong Kong. In Chap. 4, I will examine how beliefs about collaboration were constructed by the educators in the Hong Kong CAR case study. In Chap. 5, I will discuss the tensions that the teachers and facilitators experienced in negotiating identities during the collaboration process. In Chap. 6, the complexities of managing interpersonal relationships between collaborators in CAR will be discussed. In the final chapter, Chap. 7, I will bring together some of the key themes discussed in this book with a view of identifying some of the ongoing challenges for educators who are engaged in collaboration across institutional boundaries. I will conclude the book by proposing some implications for policy and practice, as well as recommendations for teachers and teacher-educators who want to work together.

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Chapter 2

Interrogating Collaboration: Discourse and Practice

Introduction

In Chap. 1, I have indicated that one of the overarching themes in this book is to develop a critical understanding of how collaboration is presented as a discourse in the context of professional development practices for school and university educators. In Chap. 3, I will critique some of the widely featured storylines of collaboration which have been presented in the teachers' professional development literature in Hong Kong as well as internationally (Brown 1998; Fairclough 2003; Foucault 1991). The purpose of this chapter is to outline the theoretical framework underpinning the study and to provide an overview of the key social theories, and research principles that I used to examine the discourses of collaboration in this book. I believe that an explanation of the theoretical framework will help readers understand why I adopted a critical approach to examine and theorise collaboration as a social practice, and how this research framework differs from some of the existing research on school–university partnership.

The theoretical framework used in this book deviates from the frameworks used in other studies about collaboration because it does not aim to present the collaboration as 'a cup of comfort' or as 'the poisoned chalice' (Hargreaves 1994). The main intention of my approach was to scrutinise some of the grand narratives about collaboration advocated in the teacher development literature and more specifically, I wanted to gain a deeper insight into how social identities, practices and relations are constructed in the context of collaboration. I also hope that this chapter will be useful for education researchers who are keen to engage with Foucault's ideas of critique and would like a more detailed explanation of the theoretical framework I adopted for my study. I would like to add that my own exploration of Foucault is still very much work in progress so this chapter does not claim to offer a 'method' for research, but rather a sharing of how I engaged with Foucault's ideas to examine an educational practice that is both highly featured and advocated in professional development discourses. When I started my work examining school–university

partnership as a doctoral student, I found the idea of using a Foucauldian inspired framework both exhilarating and frustrating because I quickly learnt that there was not a neat and tidy ‘method’ to follow. There were many bumps and tensions in my own research journey. So I hope this chapter will be a useful resource for other educational researchers who may be interested in engaging with Foucault’s ideas in their own research. I will explain why I draw on Foucault’s (1971, 1991) idea of genealogy (‘history of the present’) as a ‘method’ of inquiry to trace how school–university collaboration has been construed in teacher education discourses in the past four decades. So this chapter makes explicit the nature of my engagement with the issues concerning school–university collaboration—why and how I examined “not the spaces but the spacings”—what is said and not said about collaboration practices in teacher education discourses (Gregory 2004, p. 2).

Exploring the ‘Tropes’ of Collaboration

A genealogical approach was adopted to challenge ‘known’ truths about collaboration that are constructed in teacher education discourses. The storylines of collaboration will be critically examined in Chap. 3 to see why particular tropes have shaped some of the contemporary understanding of school–university partnership as a social practice in teacher education. According to Foucault (1985, p. 9), the purpose of adopting a genealogical approach to critique is:

...the endeavour to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known...to learn to what extent the effort to think one’s own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently.

Foucault’s idea of genealogy challenges the pursuit of the origin by disturbing what is considered to be fixed in the past. In the context of school–university partnership and the professional development of teachers, it means tracing the way discourses have been historically presented in teacher education literature to understand the different guises of collaboration. For example, we can trace the different guises of collaboration by examining what is foregrounded in collaborative action research studies; the loci of power in relation to the subject; what knowledge claims are established and defended, and what counter-discourses contest collaboration and so forth. Wetherell et al. (2003) point out that adopting Foucault’s genealogical approach is more than just studying specific language patterns in discourse, but it involves the analysis of the ways in which power/knowledge occur and are distributed:

To understand discourse we have to see it as intermeshed with power/knowledge where knowledge both constitutes and is constituted through discourse as an effect of power (p. 275).

So genealogy is employed as an approach to interrogate contemporary educational discourses about collaboration in this book with the aim of tracking its history and the regimes of power/knowledge involved in the construction of that history. So Foucault’s ideas are useful in educational research because they offer researchers a space in which to problematise the reasoning that is regulating particular educational practices. In addition to this, I also draw on the critical discourse analysis (CDA) theory offered by Fairclough (2003) to interrogate the tropes of collaboration as texts. So a critical and sociocultural theoretical framework was constructed to problematise how collaboration practices are constituted in various teacher education discourses to facilitate a broader analysis of collaboration practices than existing research studies. This approach was helpful for my study because I am interested in examining how different discourses and practices of collaboration are legitimised and how ‘rules’ of collaboration are negotiated and enacted in teacher education literature and policies.

Interrogating Collaboration in Hong Kong CAR Case Study

To further theorise school–university collaborative practices conceptually and methodologically in Chaps. 4–6, I draw on Foucault’s (1991) concepts of power/knowledge, discourse and identity to problematise the data collected from the Hong Kong collaborative action research case study to examine how power was diffused through the prevalence of various discourses in the Hong Kong socio-cultural context (Dean 1994; Kendall and Wickham 1999; Locke 2004; Mills 2003; Walshaw 2007). To make explicit what I mean by the term problematisation, I use this definition of critique by Foucault (1997, p. 32):

Critique is the movement by which the subject gives itself the right to question truth on its effects of power and to question power on its discourses of truth...in a word, the politics of truth.

So Foucault’s ideas of power, identity and knowledge are used in this book to problematise how certain knowledge about collaboration is established as facts or truths in society, while others are discredited (Foucault 1991; Mills 2003; Walshaw 2007). Foucault sees discourse as associated with relations of power (Foucault 1972, 1991; Rabinow 1984) so collaboration in this book is examined in terms of its knowledge—how collaboration is legitimised as systems of beliefs in the historical developments of education in one sociocultural context (see Chap. 4); its power—how interpersonal (social) relations are constructed in collaboration within this context (see Chap. 5); and identities—how teachers and researchers are positioned in the school–university collaborative research discourse (see Chap. 6). Figure 2.1 below, illustrates how the three dimensions of school–university collaboration as a professional practice for second is examined in this book:

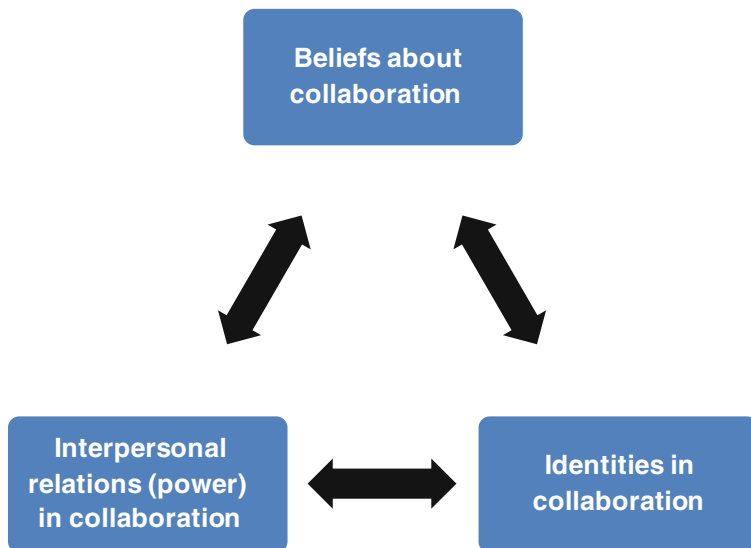


Fig. 2.1 Examining school–university collaboration as a social practice

In Chaps. 4–6, I will also examine how each dimension (beliefs, identities and interpersonal relations) is construed in the complex construction of school–university collaboration in the Hong Kong sociocultural context. Collaboration as a social practice is examined through a critical lens to analyse what Dean (1994) calls the “practices of truth, power and the self”. Popkewitz and Brennan (1998, p. xiii) posit that engaging with Foucault’s ideas of critique in the context of educational research allows educators to ask questions about the conditions of the construction of our field, and “the power/knowledge nexus represented by that construction”. Central to this approach is the understanding that language is never neutral and that it is used to negotiate identity, relations and practice in organisations (Talbot et al. 2003). The theoretical framework adopted in this book can facilitate the examination of how the textual expressions of power, conflict and resistance in the context of collaboration relate to broader social structures and change. For example, how collaboration practices are constituted through discourses in the context of Hong Kong.

In problematising collaboration as a social practice, I also draw on Giddens’ (1984) conceptualisation of structure and agency. Giddens (1984) argues that structure and agency are inextricably linked. For example, I take the view that beliefs, power relations and the construction of identities enacted are shaped both by collaboration discourse (structure) and individual actions (teachers’ and facilitators’ actions). So the theoretical framework in this study reflects Giddens’ (1984) point about the mutuality of structure/agency in the construction of social practice; that people are not ‘outside of’ social structures and vice versa. This approach aims to avoid a deterministic view in examining the factors hindering successful school–

university collaboration. From this perspective, the theoretical framework moved away from a simplistic examination of the problems of collaboration which only focuses on the contextual and personal factors, such as teachers' workloads or personal traits, but rather I tried to relate collaboration to a more holistic model that incorporates social systems, rules for collaboration, social order and social reproduction to examine collaboration as a social construct, and a product of human actions. Furthermore, Giddens' concept of power reflects Foucault's notion of power in that both Giddens and Foucault perceive power to be in a constant state of evolution. This means to understand the tensions at play, the framework for examining collaboration has to allow us to go further than examining the contextual challenges of setting up collaborative practices, it has to consider how teachers and facilitators, as social actors in the collaboration process, play a role in shaping the power structures. So adopting Giddens' conceptualisation of the 'structure/agency' dichotomy can help us do this.

To summarise, the theoretical framework used in this study is 'critical' because the approach draws on social and critical theories to examine the hidden ideologies (e.g. tropes of collaboration) and power relations in social and discursive practices. So the decision to draw on Foucault's ideas is to problematise school–university collaboration as a social practice within an educational setting. The theoretical framework used to problematise collaboration in this book aims to 'expose' the different tropes of collaboration saturated in institutional discourse. In the next section, I will provide an explanation of why combining the ideas of Foucault to a critical discourse analysis framework adds more rigour and depth to the examination of collaboration as a discursive event.

Exploring Collaboration as Discourse

The theoretical framework was constructed to facilitate the critical examination of both the *texts* and the *context* in the collaborative action research case study. Figure 2.2 shows the three key levels of analysis of collaboration in this study.

Figure 2.2 draws on Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional critical discourse analysis framework and shows collaboration analysed at three different, but inter-related levels (Fairclough 2003). The framework aims to help us understand how collaboration is a form of social practice which constitutes the social world, and is constituted by other social practices (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002). Fairclough's CDA ideas were used because he views texts as specific social events and his approach to textual analysis aims to bring a social perspective into the core of the text. Thus as social practice, collaboration discourse is in a dialectical relationship with other social dimensions in the discourse—it not only shapes other practices but also reflects them (this is indicated by the arrows in the framework). In this context of the case study in this book, it is argued that collaboration practices enacted cannot be analysed in isolation—they can only be understood in relation to the web of other discourses (texts) circulating in the Hong Kong sociopolitical

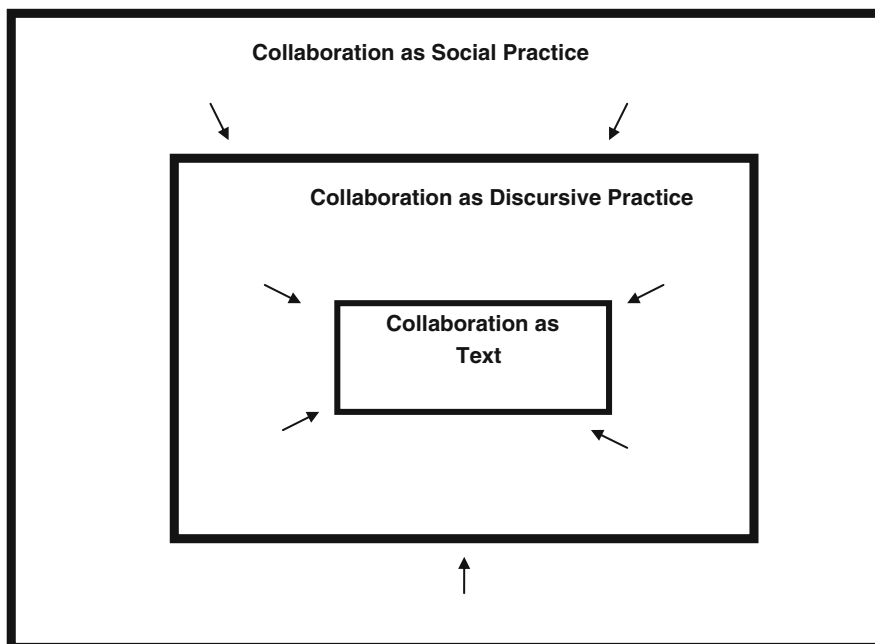


Fig. 2.2 Three-dimensional CDA framework for the case study

context (Fairclough 1995; Phillips and Jørgensen 2002). I found Fairclough's detailed analysis of the distinctive linguistic and social functions of text most appropriate for analysing the interviews, transcripts of meetings and emails in the case study because I was able to analyse, for example, the choice of vocabulary, grammar, text structure and genre in the textual data at one level and then examined the impact of these texts in shaping social practice at another level. In Fairclough's (1995, 2003) three-dimensional model for discourse analysis, he distinguishes between the text, discursive practice and social practice. Fairclough's (1995) argues that a particular discursive event has three facets or dimensions. The three facets are shown in the Fig. 2.3 (Fairclough 1995, p. 98).

I will now explain how I analysed the data as text, discursive practice and as social practice in the case study. The first level of Fairclough's framework focuses on detailed textual analysis (Fairclough 2003). Fairclough's (2003) CDA framework draws on Halliday's (Halliday and Hasan 1976; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004) systemic functional linguistics theory to identify the three 'metafunctions' of language (ideational, interpersonal and textual) that operate in discourses. I used the following headings to guide the process of textual analysis:

- Vocabulary: what lexical choices dominate the text and what words are foregrounded in the text?
- Grammar: how words are combined into clauses and sentences such as the use of modality (could, might, may, would, etc.).

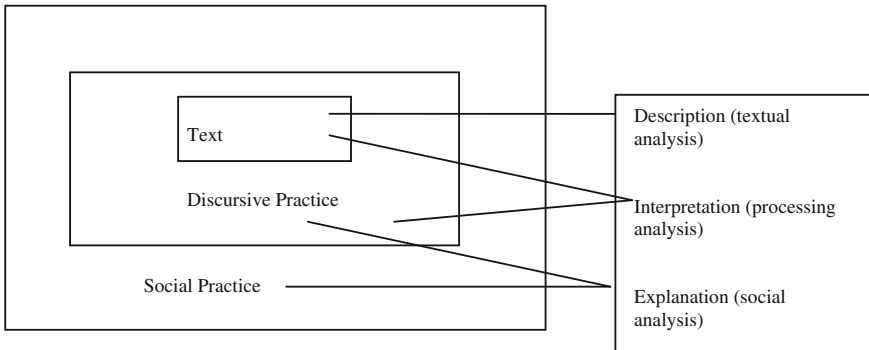


Fig. 2.3 Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for CDA

- Cohesion: how clauses and sentences are linked together as a way to analyse how connectives are used in argumentation or presentation of viewpoints.
- The use of overly polite forms in spoken text, why?
- The use of hedging and mitigating devices when presenting viewpoints (e.g. making suggestions, giving advice to group members)?
- Indirectness in conveying intended message.

In addition, I also draw on Martin and Rose's (2003) discourse analysis theory to identify how attitudinal words were used in the texts to illuminate how interpersonal relationships were represented in the Hong Kong school–university collaboration case study in Chap. 5. For example, I identified the positional and relational sources of attitudinal statements in the texts to analyse how power relations between the teachers and the facilitators were negotiated and managed in the email data.

The second level of analysis is discursive practice. At this level of analysis, I examined what discourse was produced and consumed. Fairclough (1995, p. 134) argues that at this second level, the analysis involves “both detailed moment-by-moment explication of how participants produce and interpret texts, which conversation analysis and pragmatics excel at, and analysis which focuses upon the relationship of the discursive event to the order of discourse, and upon the question of which discursive practices are being drawn upon and in what combinations.” Analysis of discursive practice means examining the specific production, distribution and consumption of a text within the social event. For example, I examined what text production conditions prevail. These are some of the questions I used to guide the analysis of discursive practice at this second level (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002):

- What kinds of processes does a text go through before it is written or spoken, and what changes does it undergo during those processes?
- What intertextual chain of texts is apparent? Has the text appeared in other texts?

- How are the structure and the content of the text formulated?
- How does the writer/speaker want the text to be ‘read’/interpreted?

The third level of analysis is social practice. At this level, the text is examined in the wider context of institutional and social practices such as examining the relationship between social practice and the order of discourse. For example, I examined the way researchers and teachers talked about collaboration and analysed how the texts draw on wider reform, institutional and teacher education discourses currently in operation in the Hong Kong sociocultural context. The following questions guided the analysis of the data as social practice (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002, p. 86):

- What kind of network of discourses does the practice belong to?
- How are the discourses distributed and regulated across the text?
- What kind of institutional and economic conditions is the discursive practice subject?
- What social and cultural theory can shed light upon the social practice in question?

In doing critical discourse analysis, it is useful for the researcher to construct headings that are appropriate and relevant for the research context, but there is not a bounded set of rules on how the analysis should be done or what headings are used. In my framework, I borrowed some of the headings from Fairclough (2003) and Phillips and Jørgensen (2002), and I also added questions of my own, which were relevant to my research context. The sets of guiding questions presented in this section for the three levels of analysis are intended to be a starting point, further questions and headings should emerge as analysis develops.

To illuminate the various tensions and complexities in negotiating school–university collaboration as a social practice, I applied the tools of CDA to trace how beliefs and knowledge, social relations and social identities were discursively embedded in the textual data, for example how the texts support or contest particular social practices of school–university collaboration. I also examined how the school and university educators made sense of the collaborative action research discourse as ‘collaborators’. For example, to examine how professional identity is a position within discourse by analysing how language is constructed and use to position researchers and teachers working together in a CAR project. The analysis aims to illuminate the construction of a particular set of relations between the teachers, researchers, institutions and society (Benwell and Stokoe 2006; Fairclough 1995). To summarise, the textual data were examined in terms of the language, the process for school–university collaboration, and as instances of discursive events in the Hong Kong sociocultural milieu. In the next section, I make explicit what I mean by negotiation of collaboration as systems of beliefs, interpersonal relations and identities in school–university collaboration. The aim is to provide a detailed explanation of how the data were analysed in Chaps. 4–6.

Exploring the Construction of Beliefs in Collaboration in Chap. 4

Examining collaboration as systems of beliefs and knowledge means examining the texts from a representational point of view. The purpose of the approach was to understand how collaboration was represented as an event in the context of the case study. Fairclough (2003) argues that elements of social events are selectively ‘filtered’ by the producers of the texts and they impact on how concretely or abstractly social events are represented. In Chap. 4, I identify what beliefs about collaboration were foregrounded, backgrounded or suppressed by the teachers and researchers in the case study. I also examine which elements of the collaborative action research project were present/absent in the textual data to identify what beliefs and knowledge about collaborative action research were given greater or lesser prominence by the facilitators and teachers (Fairclough 2003). I also examined how collaboration was explained/ legitimised (reasons, causes and purposes) and constructed by the teachers and facilitators. Using Fairclough’s term, the aim was to examine the ‘presence’ of collaboration in the text to see how it was represented and to identify the ways in which language was used to assign meaning to the school–university collaboration experience in the Hong Kong sociocultural context.

Exploring the Negotiation of Interpersonal Relationships in Collaboration in Chap. 5

In Chap. 5, I examine the discursive construction of interpersonal relations in collaborative action research to identify how power was mediated and constituted in the context of this case study (Foucault 1978). To analyse the discursive construction of interpersonal relations, I draw on what Fairclough calls ‘ways of acting’ in the collaborative action research project textual data (Fairclough 2003). Fairclough (2003) states that analysing the ‘ways of acting’ in the text (informing, advising, promising, warning, judgement and so forth) is a way to understand how social relations are enacted. The aim of examining how social relations were enacted and co-constructed by the teachers and facilitators in the texts was to address some of the broader questions about the role of language in constructing collaboration as a social practice in a particular sociocultural context. A major theme surrounding this study is that collaboration operates in a sociopolitical context of competing discourses, and analysing ‘talk’ is a way to identify how these discourses were contested in the textual data. Furthermore, by examining how facilitators and teachers negotiated collaboration in the textual data (e.g. the collaborative action research meeting transcripts and emails), we can begin to understand the distribution and interplay of power within the collaboration relationship, for example, how notions of mutuality

and equity are constructed and contested in collaboration discourse. In the context of this study, power is conceptualised to mean asymmetries between the teachers and researchers in discourse events (Fairclough 2003).

Exploring the Construction of Identities in Collaboration in Chap. 6

A major theme in this study was to examine the complexities of identity formation in school–university collaboration. Johnson (2006, p. 213) points out that “identity is represented and shaped through the social and discursive practices that are available to individuals and groups at particular moments”. In examining the formation of identities in the context of this study, I draw on the Foucauldian understanding of identity—identity in collaboration is perceived to be fluid, transient and institutionally constrained (Clarke 2008; Mills 2003; Walshaw 2007). For example in Chap. 6, I examine how facilitators and the teachers recognised the self and others in the collaborative action research project. Foucault problematised the notion of identity and the politics which surround it. As previously mentioned, analysing identity formation is a central tenet of Foucault’s work. For Foucault, subjectivity and power are intertwined and our identities are constructed through our dialogical relations with others—our subjectivity is not given, but constructed through discourse (Clarke 2008). So in Chap. 6, I examine the interplay of power and identity in the collaborative action research textual data to identify how collaboration identities were constructed, accepted, contested and negotiated (Gee 2005). Thus the framework for analysing identity formation in the context of this study was constructed to examine collaboration identities in terms of how the English language teachers and researchers ‘accounted for themselves’ and others in the school–university partnership project (Chan and Clarke 2014; Clarke 2009; MacLure 2003). For example, how teachers and facilitators ‘authored’ their identities at the different stages of the collaboration process. The theoretical framework aims to show that the processes of identity formation are intricately linked to the discourses and the social contexts that we work within (Clarke 2009). Miller Marsh (2003) describes this as a continual process of ‘fashioning and refashioning our identities by patching together fragments of the discourses to which we are exposed to’ (p. 8). To illustrate, I examined how the teachers’ identities in the Hong Kong collaborative action research project were shaped by the reform discourses which positioned them as ‘technicians’ of reform practices. The analysis of the data also showed the different ways in which the teachers became or contested the identities constructed in the texts. Thus identities in collaboration are partly given and partly negotiated, so examining the co-construction of identities in collaboration practices is a useful way to see how the boundaries between our social and individual identities overlap (Clarke 2009). Chapter 6 illuminates that identity formation for teachers and researchers is highly complex and ambiguous in school–university partnership.

Summary

School–university collaborative research is often constructed in education policy documents in an enticing way and is neatly defined and ‘packaged’ as a meaningful professional development activity conducted by school educators and university researchers working as partners. However, in reality school–university collaboration is frequently characterised by tensions and complexities (Chan 2014; Chan and Clarke 2014; Johnston 2009; Stewart 2006), but there is also currently a lack of studies which examine some of the very real challenges that educators face during the collaboration process. So although school–university is often presented as a useful professional development opportunity in teacher education literature, achieving successful inter-institutional collaboration is not easy. This chapter makes explicit the nature of my engagement with the issues concerning the discursive construction of school–university collaboration as a social practice. I have provided an overview of the theoretical principles I used to problematise the dominant narratives or tropes of collaboration, on which this book is based. I have argued that a CDA theoretical framework and the ideas of Foucault can provide a much needed space for interrogating the discourses and practices of school-university collaboration as a way to ‘debunk’ the grand narratives about professional collaboration in the context of teacher education. The next chapter employs the notion of genealogy to trace the dominant tropes of collaboration in teacher education discourse, and I will trace the origin of collaboration by examining the different forms and meanings the word has taken in different contexts through history.

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Chapter 3

Genealogy of Collaboration

Introduction

This chapter deconstructs teacher education discourses to reveal the politics of collaboration. Collaboration is one of those words that is frequently used in teacher development literature and has a way of making us feel ‘good’ because the word conveys collective action, community, co-construction of knowledge, support and partnership. The saying ‘two heads are better than one’ is commonly used to justify team work. When we cannot solve a problem on our own, it is natural to find a friend or colleague for advice. So, collaboration evokes a lot of positive feelings because of what the word conveys. For this reason, collaboration is often presented as a ‘strategy’ to solve problems by leveraging on the diverse range professional skills within a team, an institution and in a community.

Teaching is sometimes described as an egg box profession and this has been presented as being negative for professional growth. From this perspective, teachers who resist collaboration are sometimes described as ‘lone wolves’. Since joining the profession, I have been encouraged to attend professional development workshops and seminars where teachers are told the merits of professional collaboration. A commonly used metaphor to illustrate the power of collaboration and community building in a professional context is the story of the ‘wild geese’. Wild geese fly in a v-formation as a group until they reach their destination and they instinctively take it in turn to lead and support each other, and in these workshops, teachers are often encouraged to learn from nature by embracing professional collaboration. But in reality, collaboration as a social practice is much more complex than wild geese flying in formation. For example, professionals from different institutional backgrounds may experience challenges in negotiating collaboration when working as a team. As I have noted in Chap. 1, in teacher education literature, school-university partnership is often neatly defined as an activity which is “conducted by school educators and university researchers working as partners, with the goal of producing knowledge that is meaningful and useful for both educators’ practice and for

academic purposes” (Yashkina and Levin 2006). In this discourse, establishing mutual interests, shared goals, shared power and ownership of the research are foregrounded as key features of collaboration. However, in reality school-university collaboration is frequently characterised by tensions and complexities (Chan 2014; Chan and Clarke 2014; Johnston 2009; Stewart 2006). Studies that have interviewed teachers who have participated in school-university collaborative research projects have identified very real challenges, both practical and psychological, that they faced during the collaboration process (Chow et al. 2010). When I was a teacher at school, I was invited to be a participant in an ethnographical study conducted by a university research team. I remember the researcher who came to observe my lessons and interviewed me about my teaching strategies, but it was not collaborative research because he was doing research *on* me rather than *with* me. I was merely assisting the teacher educator with his study and had no ownership of the project. This type of school-university research practice is still common in the context of education, but it has also been strongly criticised by researchers who believe that school-university research should be much more equitable so that school educators can benefit more from the collaboration process as teaching professionals (Burns 1999; Carr and Kemmis 1986; Darling-Hammond and Sykes 1999; Elliott 1991; Grundy 1994; Johnston 2009). However, studies have shown that even when school-university collaboration is presented as an equitable partnership and teachers are positioned as co-decision makers, the reality of achieving successful collaboration is still difficult (Chan 2014; Chan and Clarke 2014; Groundwater-Smith et al. 2013). So, the aim of this chapter is to examine the different ‘story lines’ (tropes) of collaboration practices in the educational context. Using Foucault’s idea of genealogy, these different representations of collaboration and partnership will be unpacked and examined critically (see Chap. 2 for a detailed explanation of how I use Foucault’s ideas of critique to understand collaboration). The intention is to interrogate the discourse of each practice more closely to find out how each story line/trope presents collaboration as a discourse and as a social practice for educators.

The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I begin by tracing the origin of collaboration by examining the different forms and meanings the word has taken in different contexts through history. This is to illuminate the different constructions of collaboration and to trace its etymology as a way to problematise some of the taken for granted assumptions of the term. In the second part, I will examine the different constructions of collaboration as a social practice as they are presented in various professional development discourses over four decades.

Etymology of Collaboration

Collaboration used in the context of education discourse evokes considerable promise. The promises include ‘pleasurable’ and ‘mutually empowering’ partnerships to share resources and knowledge (Somekh 1994). The following examples

illustrate how collaboration is used in a positive way in a wide range of discourses from different educational institutions' mission statements:

- *Creating a collaborating partnership for sustainable education*
- *Building collaborative partnership to strengthen children and families*
- *New Collaboration...contributes to Education in Hong Kong*¹

Linguistically, collaboration is often presented as a 'solution' for improving problems arising in educational contexts. For example, as illustrated in the various mission statements from different contexts, collaboration is often presented as a practice which is sustainable, strong (strength), nurturing, engaging, empowering and enabling for professionals. It is also used to evoke a democratic demeanour; the concept is presented in institutional discourses to imply cooperation, mutual reciprocity and equal partnership. However, if we unpack the word, it can be seen that collaboration has been coloured by various shades of meaning in different socio-historical contexts and the term has not always had a positive application. According to the definitions given by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, to collaborate has three constructions:

- *to cooperate with an agency or instrumentality with which one is not immediately connected*
- *to cooperate or willingly assist an enemy of one's country and especially an occupying force*
- *to work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavour*

All three definitions indicate the essence of collaboration as 'willing' cooperation between partners. The Oxford Concise Dictionary of English Etymology identifies the Latin root of collaborate as *collaboratus* meaning *to work* (*labore*) and *with* (*com*), which also suggests that 'to collaborate' entails cooperation between two and more people joining forces to reach a common goal, so the notion of building relations with another is central to all constructions of collaboration. Furthermore, all the definitions of collaboration entail agency, that means an agent (e.g. a person, a team, an organisation, an institution, a country) working with another. Therefore, it can be seen that *collaboration* as a word has a way of foregrounding itself as a practice of democratic cooperation and 'silencing' the problematic power relations that such cooperation entails. I will now give two examples to provide further illustrations of how the concept of collaboration is construed in two different social situations.

The first example of collaboration is associated with social capital. Social capital, according to Putnam (1995), refers to features of social organisation that facilitates collective action and mutual reciprocity. The features include networks,

¹http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/8/7/5/5/p187555_index.html.
<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrmnt/css/ppt/chap1.htm>.
<http://web.edu.hku.hk/collaboration.php>.

norms and social trusts, which Putnam (1995) argues, are used as tools to enhance individual productivity and social connectedness. In sociocultural contexts (in political, business, management, medical and educational discourses), collaboration between partners is construed as mutually beneficial and positive—a form of co-operation that entails the sharing of intellectual knowledge and resources or the same goals. These partnerships are presented as mutual agreements that claim to improve professional knowledge and skills. So, collaboration in this sense is enacted based on a set of shared beliefs, values, knowledge and customs, and is perceived to be a practice that can be nurtured. For example, the following published titles position collaboration as a ‘culture’, a ‘spirit’ or a ‘power’ that can be created and fostered: *Creating a Culture of Collaboration* (Schuman 2006), *Fostering a Spirit of Collaboration* (Gregory 2004) and *The Power of Collaboration* (Keroack 2005). The discourse in these types of publications sees collaboration as a solution “to address problems, add value, and achieve desired outcomes” for people working in partnership (Schuman 2006, p. xxiii). In this trope, there is an assumption that collaborators have a shared system of beliefs and the relations of power are equal. So, partnership (as social capital) is presented as a panacea for resolving problems identified in the contexts of business, education and other people-focused sectors in contemporary society. As I will discuss later in this chapter, it is this particular construction of collaboration (as social capital) that is often advocated in school-university partnership literature as being ‘good’ and ‘beneficial’ for educators to learn together and exchange knowledge.

In contrast, the second example of collaboration evokes traitorous cooperation, which is used in war/military discourse about a person or a group of people who cooperates with a foreign occupier of their country. This understanding of collaboration is used to suggest *a traitor*, someone who cooperates with the perceived enemy of the country. The French term *collaborateur* was first used to describe individuals in France who helped the German army during the term of the Vichy Regime (1940–1944), and this interpretation of traitorous collaboration has been popularised through the film *Lust Caution*² about a Chinese businessman who collaborated with the Japanese occupiers during the Second World War in occupied Shanghai (Chang 2007). In the story, the Chinese phrase ‘wei hu dzuo chung’ was used to refer to Chinese collaborators (traitors). The phrase translates as the person who is killed by a tiger becomes a ghost who works for the tiger and it is used in a pejorative sense implying that the ghost (the Chinese collaborator/traitor) is enslaved to the tiger (the Japanese occupiers). In this fictional interpretation, collaboration is clearly construed as an act of betrayal and it also suggests that the relationship is not an equal partnership because the Chinese collaborators worked with people who were in a much more powerful position than themselves. If we

²Lust Caution is a story set in the midst of the Japanese occupation of China and Hong Kong written by Eileen Chang. It portrays the love hate relationship between Wang Chia-chih, an anti-Japanese student activist and Mr. Yee, a Chinese politician who collaborated with the Japanese Occupational Government during the Second World War.

think about collaborative relationship as a continuum, then collaboration in this context would be on the opposite side of the more equitable partnerships that are prominently featured in school-university partnership discourses. So, collaboration as traitorous cooperation is more likely to be a practiced based on exploitation and enslavement. It is also interesting to note that the word collaboration has no exact translation in the Chinese language, the closest word in Chinese which is used to mean collaboration is ‘cooperation’ (work together). The point being made here is that the English term collaboration references quite distinct discourses with very different meaning potentials and each of these can potentially infuse or contaminate collaboration in practice.

Deconstructing Collaboration in Teacher Education Discourses

This section critically evaluates some of the major *tropes* (the narrative story lines) of school-university collaboration that have been presented in teacher education literature over four decades. There are two main objectives. First, the major studies and discourses that have shaped particular practices and ways of talking about school-university collaboration in different teacher educational contexts will be problematised to draw attention to the current gap that exists in the literature in regard to including more critical studies in this field of research. Second, Foucault’s idea of genealogy (see Chap. 2) is used to trace the construction of school-university collaboration as a body of knowledge in the history of professional development of teachers (Brown 1998; Foucault 1990, 1991).

Over the past three decades, global economic and social changes have spawned new ways of ‘talking’ about teachers’ professionalism (Ball 2003). Changing global economic and social contexts of education has been presented as reasons for legitimising curriculum reforms and changes in teacher development practices (Day and Sachs 2004; Fullan and Hargreaves 1992; Hargreaves 1994). In teacher education literature, both research and policy oriented, the themes of school-university partnership and professional collaboration have been foregrounded as beneficial for school improvement and teacher empowerment (Atweh et al. 1998; Carr and Kemmis 1986; Darling-Hammond and Sykes 1999; Elliott 1991; Fullan and Hargreaves 1992; Macpherson et al. 1998; McLaughlin and Talbert 2006; Oja and Smulyan 1989; Stenhouse 1975; Tsui et al. 2009; Little 2001). A common theme in these streams of professional development discourses is the need to build professional learning communities to improve teaching and learning practices. Furthermore, collaboration as a practice is presented as a way of promoting teacher empowerment, consensus, equity and democracy—a form of professional practice that is packaged as being desirable for teaching professionals (Cochran-Smith and Fries 2001; Davies and Bansel 2007; Franklin et al. 2004). Another presentation of collaboration is an argument that collective learning can resolve contemporary

educational problems arising from classroom practice (Darling-Hammond and Sykes 1999; Mitchell and Sackney 2000; Little 2001). However, I do not feel that these understandings of collaboration adequately illustrate how power is constituted and mediated within a sociopolitical context. For example, the literature that advocates collaborative learning practices for school and university educators does not always address the challenges of negotiating collaborative relationships including how consensus and mutuality are achieved or how the role of power and conflicts are resolved. There is an assumption that collaboration and building learning communities are uncomplicated. The review of the literature also suggests that while there is a push for more collaboration among educators across institutions in teacher education discourses and policy documents, but as an area of research, it is under theorised (Davison 2006). This prompts three important questions to be considered in problematising collaboration as a social practice in changing times: why is collaboration advocated as a practice in an educational setting, who is advocating it and in what context is it being advocated? I hope to address these three questions by examining how collaboration has been ‘packaged’ as a body of knowledge in the context of teacher education discourses (Foucault 1971, 1978; Moss 1998) because these different ways of talking about collaboration have played a significant role in shaping contemporary beliefs and practices concerning the professional development of teachers. To do this, I have structured this section thematically using the figurative metaphor of ‘tropes’. This is a useful and interesting way to trace how each collaboration practice constructs its own definitions and ‘story lines’ of how teachers should learn. I have identified three major tropes to be examined more comprehensively in this chapter:

- *collaboration to improve practice*
- *collaboration for teacher emancipation*
- *collaboration for educational partnership*

I will discuss each trope using the Foucauldian three-dimensional grid (see Chap. 2) to explore how power relations, knowledge and subjectivity (identity) are located in each collaboration practice (Best and Kellner 1991). To unpack each trope, I used the following guiding questions to structure the critique of each collaboration practice:

- Who advocates collaboration and why?
- How are the rules for collaboration constructed and legitimised in the discourses?
- How are teachers and researchers positioned?
- What knowledge is privileged in each trope?
- How is power constituted in the discourses of collaboration?

The aim of using the guiding questions is to interrogate the ‘plot’ of each trope/narrative to trace its construction as ideology that warrants collaboration practices in the dominant theories of action research and school-university collaboration in teacher education literature (Best and Kellner 1991).

Trope 1: Collaboration for Educational Change

This section examines the body of research which foregrounds the benefits of university researcher supporting school teachers to carry out school-based action research as a way of improving practice and the curriculum. More specifically, the discussion focuses on deconstructing how collaboration is presented in the ‘teachers-as-researchers movement’ discourse, a practice of action research for educational change advocated by British educational researchers, Stenhouse (1975) and Elliott (1991).

Stenhouse and Elliott’s notion of collaborative action research has been widely advocated as a ‘good’ way for teachers to be engaged in professional development in other countries including the US, Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong. Collaboration in this trope positions teachers as researchers who work *with* university facilitators to systematically carry out classroom-based action research to explore practice, collaboration is construed as a way to implement educational change (Elliott 1991; Oja and Smulyan 1989). For example, action research is talked about in this stream of discourse as a professional development activity for teachers to test new practices and to break free from the constraints caused by habits built up in the past (Stenhouse 1975). The concept of researchers supporting teachers is central to this understanding of collaboration. Teacher-led action research can be traced to work of Dewey (1910) who advocated that educators should explore their own practice and learn from reflecting on practice, but it was the social psychologist Kurt Lewin, who coined the term action research (see McTaggart 1991). Lewin was keen to study social issues and constructed one of the first understandings of action research as a practice of reflective enquiry and proposed the view that collaboration through action research should be democratic and participatory, but it was Stephen Corey who introduced action research into education and became its chief advocate in post-war America in the 1950s (McTaggart 1991; Whitehead and McNiff 2006). Corey’s understanding of action research was primarily to help teachers improve practice and collaboration. In this view, this trope of professional development positions teachers as researchers who are responsible for resolving practice-related problems with the support of university researchers working with them in schools. This understanding of school-university collaboration assumes that teachers and researchers can work together in an unproblematic way, sharing the same research goals and agendas. Hence, collaboration is encouraged in this representation of action research because it is thought that professional discussions about problems arising from practice can promote educational change (Stenhouse 1975). Therefore, the key role of the university facilitator in Stenhouse and Elliot’s understanding of school-university collaboration is to help teachers enact their identity as ‘teacher-researchers’ so they understand problems and can use evidence and data collected through action research to transform practice (Elliott 1991; Erickson et al. 2005; Stenhouse 1975). In this trope of professional learning, improvement of practice is framed as a key rationale for school-university collaboration, that is, partnership between researchers and

teachers is presented as a way to encourage school teachers to confront educational problems arising from their own practice (Elliott 1991; Macpherson et al. 1998). Furthermore, Stenhouse's understanding of action research is presented as a commitment to the practice of self-development and self-reflection:

The commitment to systematic questioning of one's own teaching as a basis for development; the commitment and the skills to study one's own teaching; the concern to question and to test theory in practice by the use of those skills (Stenhouse 1975, p. 144).

The discourse positions classroom research as a 'professional commitment' and implies that the problems arising from practice are always practice-based. In the above quotation, the 'ideals' for action research are presented as being achievable and unproblematic, but how this can lead to transformation and improvement of practice is not always fully articulated or presented in a critical way (Brown and Jones 2001). For example, the discourse does not acknowledge the complexities of teachers negotiating their identities as researchers in the process of discussing problems arising from practice. So, this trope is problematic because the discourse presents an assumption that teachers who do action research will somehow figure out how to negotiate their identity as reflective practitioners and will not question the views and ideas of the university researchers. It seems that both Stenhouse (1975) and Elliott (1991) present a pragmatic understanding of action research in their work, and this pragmatic construction construes teachers as 'willing' agents of change, but in my own experiences of doing collaborative action research, some teachers were defensive of their own practice and resisted change. Furthermore, this trope of professional development presents a misleading view that educational problems are always related to teaching and the actions of teachers (Elliott 1991). In reality, problems arising from teaching may not always be practice-oriented and may need to be examined more fully in the broader context of current competing social, economic and ideological agendas.

Another issue that is not fully explained in this trope is how researchers and teachers negotiate and manage interpersonal relations and power while doing school-based action research together. The role of the university facilitator is idealised as someone who simply helps teachers to "clarify, test, develop and disseminate the ideas that underpin their practice" (Elliott 1991, p. 14), but at the same time, the discourse does not challenge how the power differences between university researchers and school teachers are resolved while enacting collaborative research:

Our role as outsiders was perhaps more authentically one which facilitated, rather than controlled, teachers' thinking about their practices. The facilitating strategy was articulated as one of formulating diagnostic and action hypotheses for teachers to test in their classrooms. Classroom inquiry became a collaborative process (Elliott 1991, p. 21).

On the one hand, the discourse of action research is highly critical of university researchers who 'hijack' teachers' research agendas, but on the other hand, it does not problematise adequately the complex process of outsiders negotiating their identity as 'facilitators'. In practice, the power relations between researchers and teachers are likely to be more ambiguous and complex than those presented in the

above quotation because teachers and researchers work in different institutional settings and so each will have their own agenda and contextual constraints (Groundwater-Smith et al. 2013). Subsequently, Elliott's (1991) and Stenhouse's (1975) representation of school-university collaboration does not fully address the complex interplay of power and authority of outsiders working with school teachers (Peters 2004). So, this trope of collaboration needs to be further problematised, to take into considerations of how the practice of action research shapes the identities and interpersonal relations of teachers and researchers working together as co-researchers in a particular sociocultural context. For example, Elliott (1991) is critical of university researchers who take control of the research when collaborating with school teachers, but his work does not clearly explain how the principle of shared ownership can be adhered whilst maintaining research momentum and focus. In addition, teachers with no experience of conducting school-based research may find it difficult in reality not to position the university researcher as 'the expert'. In summary, although historically the action research movement in the context of teacher education was significant in legitimising a new practice of school-university collaboration, one that positions researchers as 'facilitators' who should help teachers carry out 'insider research' in schools (Elliott 1991; Stenhouse 1975), what is not examined in this discourse are the tensions and complexities arising from inter-institutional collaboration, for example, how consensus and democracy in collaboration are achieved in practice or how power is mediated between outsiders from a university working with teachers within a school setting.

Trope 2: Collaboration for Emancipation

This section deconstructs the discourse of a practice of action research that promotes collaboration as a way for educators to engage in the types of critical conversations that will lead to social transformation. More specifically, I examine Carr and Kemmis' (1986) concept of emancipatory action research that is presented as a practice of "critical educational science". In this trope of teacher development, collaboration is presented as a 'transforming' process for rational change through self-initiated collective inquiry:

Action research not only creates conditions under which practitioners can identify aspects of institutional life which frustrate rational change; it also offers a theoretical account of why these constraints on rational change should be overcome, by offering and enacting an emancipatory theory in the form of the theory in which action research itself is justified. It also offers a theory of how the constraints of ideology can be overcome. This can be made clear by considering the participatory and collaborative character of action research, by which action researchers are authentically engaged, as individuals, in the process of enlightenment, and democratically involved as members of collaborating groups, in the process of organising action (Carr and Kemmis 1986, p. 198)

In the above quotation, the following beliefs about action research are foregrounded in the discourse: enlightenment, emancipation, participation,

collaboration, consensus and democracy. In this narrative, there is greater emphasis on collective learning as a way to achieve self-enlightenment and emancipation. Carr and Kemmis (1986) argue that action research can only be defined as such if the practice meets the following conditions: it is (i) participatory, (ii) collaborative and (iii) employs the spiral of self-reflection. Collaboration in the context of emancipatory action research is presented as an ideal in the following way by Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 204):

In emancipatory action research, educational development is understood as a joint enterprise which expresses a joint commitment to the development of educational practices as forms of interaction which taken together, form the fabric of social and educational relationships...the practitioner group itself takes responsibility for its own emancipation from the dictates of irrationality, injustice, alienation and unfulfilment.

The quotation presents collaboration as a transformative social process to empower teachers. This discourse construes collaboration as a source of collective power to resolve educational 'injustice' in contemporary society and presents teachers' emancipation from the social and political constraints impacting on the practice of education as an achievable tenet (Atweh et al. 1998; Carr and Kemmis 1986). Similar to the construction of teachers as researchers by Stenhouse and Elliot, Carr and Kemmis' discourse of emancipatory action research also presents a view that educational problems are classroom-based and practice-related. This construction of professional learning also positions teachers as being solely responsible for transforming classroom practice. However, these notions are not sufficiently problematising how power, identities and beliefs are mediated and constituted in the context of 'empowering' teachers through collective inquiry. For example, the discourse does not foreground the complexities of teachers initiating change and transforming classroom practice in the broader sociopolitical contexts of educational reform. It also does not examine how empowerment through critical conversations is achieved in the process of professional collaboration. So, the discourse of emancipatory action research constructs a rather idealistic view that social justice and empowerment are achievable outcomes of collaboration and action research without always taking into account that teachers are also constrained by social, economic and political factors such as the lack of resources, opportunities to make policy level decisions and access to funding to do research. Furthermore, it does not take into consideration that in a highly hierarchical school setting (such as Hong Kong), it is difficult to know if participation in collaborative action research is voluntary or mandatory.

Another issue which is under examined and unclear in Carr and Kemmis' (1986) arguments for collective inquiry is how power relations between collaborators are negotiated. It seems that establishing a flat hierarchy is a common claim in the discourse of emancipatory action research, but in reality, power relations between the collaborators are likely to be much more problematic and complex because of ever shifting social and institutional contexts (e.g. university researchers collaborating with school teachers or senior teachers collaborating with novice teachers). Therefore, this trope of professional development does not always make clear how

some of the ideals, such as equity and mutuality are to be achieved in the context of teachers working within contextual constraints including ever increasing workload in schools. So, while the ideals presented for emancipatory action research are laudable, they also need to be problematised in each social context to further address the complex issues of power and identity formation when educators come together to do research.

To sum up, this trope of collective learning has a tendency to subject teachers to one identity mode by presenting the assumption that all teachers must be empowered and be engaged in critical conversations. At times, it presents a view that teacher's professional identity is fixed and stable. But in practice, teacher's professional identity in the contemporary society is much more transient, fluid and a product of competing discourses (Chan and Clarke 2014; Clarke 2008). So, it is more likely that a teacher's subjectivity is a product constructed from a wide range of discourses circulating in the sociocultural context (Walshaw 2007). Indeed, some of these discourses may validate empowerment and enlightenment, but others may contest them too. For example, the accountability discourse is now highly foregrounded in Hong Kong's education policies, and this has legitimised the practice of both student and peer evaluation of a teacher's performance as a professional. This practice may in reality have the effect of encouraging competition among colleagues rather than collaboration. So, these colliding discourses also offer teachers competing ways of constructing their professional identity within a particular sociocultural context (Walshaw 2007). It seems that this trope is advocating a set of 'rules' for collective inquiry, and at the same time, it is inadvertently dictating how collaboration in an educational setting should be enacted. It can be argued that the trope of emancipation presents an over-idealistic understanding of how teachers learn because it does not examine how power relations between collaborators are negotiated in doing collective inquiry or fully problematise the struggles and tensions in the process of identity construction from a critical perspective.

Trope 3: Collaboration for Community Partnership

This section examines the construction of collaboration in the teachers' professional development literature as a practice of building a community through networking. In this discourse, school teachers and teacher educators are positioned as 'practitioners who share common interests and concerns' and professional learning is construed as a collective event where educators 'network' to share knowledge and concerns about educational issues (Miller 2001, p. 102):

School-university partnerships are unique organizations. In some ways, they are like networks in that they connect practitioners who share common interests and concerns about education.

The concept of building professional communities, networks and partnerships for educators to learn together emerged in teacher education literature in the 1990s (see Darling-Hammond and Sykes 1999; Lieberman 2000; Miller 2001; Little 2001). What is highly foregrounded in this trope is the ideal that professional communities are beneficial and necessary for transforming educational practices. The meaning conveyed in the literature is that a professional community has the power to ‘shelter’ teachers from the storms caused by the ‘external’ factors’ beyond the classroom and the school. Some of the beliefs underpinning this trope include mutuality, democracy, equity and collective learning:

Shared vision, collaboration, and learning together provide the foundation for teachers to take collective responsibility for students’ success; the community’s interdependent work structure allows teachers to act on this vision. An established teacher learning community makes the school accountable for student learning, rather than locating accountability exclusively in an external mechanism... (McLaughlin and Talbert 2006, p. 7).

In the above quote, collaboration is constructed as an important professional activity for teachers, who are also positioned as being accountable for student achievements in schools. However, the view constructed in this discourse is one which perceives forming learning communities as unproblematic and wholly desired by educators alike. Similar to the tropes discussed in the previous sections, the trope of community partnership legitimises a particular practice of collaboration by setting rules for educators to follow. Furthermore, the discourse positions teachers to be responsible for successful implementation of reform initiatives, thus advocating the scrutiny of educational problems in the public arena and warrants accountability from teachers (McLaughlin and Black-Hawkins 2004; McLaughlin and Talbert 2006, p. 7):

A learning community develops shared language about practice and commits to high-quality intellectual work for their students. In a vibrant learning community, teachers practice and standards for students’ learning are more in sync, in marked contrast to the variability one finds along the corridors of many American schools. Practice, traditionally teachers’ private domain, moves into the public space of the learning community.

The quote shows how the teachers’ public identity is foregrounded as being more valued over private identity (Cochran-Smith and Fries 2001). Furthermore, collaboration is presented as a body of knowledge to legitimise educational practices that align to the prevailing education discourses circulating in the broader sociocultural context. For example, the notion of shared group identity is also foregrounded to make learning networks distinct and ‘good’ for teachers. The following are the positive attributes of professional learning communities conveyed in this trope: (i) They construct their own culture, norms, values, expectations, rules, and roles (ii) They are regional and multi-focused organisations. (iii) They may be connected to reform initiatives, but they also answer to the school’s concerns and needs (Lieberman and Miller 1999; Miller 2001). Furthermore, the discourse also sets ground rules for collaboration and these ‘rules’ dictate how a partnership should be set up. From this viewpoint, the rules are constructed as a system of belief and knowledge for participants to follow and they legitimise this particular collaboration

practice as being 'more desirable' than other types of professional development activities because it conveys the notion of shared values and ownership of the learning agendas. In a professional network, teachers are 'safe' because they are learning among equals. Trust and mutual understanding are core principles shaping the practice. However, in reality, teachers who work in the same institution may not have equal status or equal access to resources such as time release from their teaching schedule to participate in community learning projects. There is also an assumption that teachers who work in similar contexts may share the same agendas, but this is not always the case. So, a problem with this trope is its tendency to foreground the ideals of teachers learning together, but it does not fully articulate the problems and complexities of how social relations, identities and power relations within professional learning communities are negotiated. For example, educators may have different reasons for joining learning communities, so establishing how the educators attain shared goals within the community is one of the issues which needs to be examined more critically in this trope. Furthermore, this trope does not fully address how institutional practices and culture play a role in shaping a learning community's goals and decisions. For example, collaboration is now a common criterion in many educational staff appraisal forms so educators who 'network' may be assessed more positively by senior managers than those who do not. So, identifying why educators collaborate in the context of reform may become more opaque as collaboration gains popularity and currency as a 'good' and 'beneficial' professional practice for teacher learning. This is why the ideological and political agendas on which the trope of community partnership discourses are built, need to be further problematised (Franklin et al. 2004; Walshaw 2007).

This section has illustrated how collaboration as a social practice between teachers and researchers has been politicised as a strategy to develop common solutions to educational problems in contemporary contexts. I have deconstructed how collaboration and partnership are presented in three prominent tropes of professional development practices for educators in teacher education literature. What I have highlighted is how collaboration discourses have consistently drawn on the discourses of democracy, partnership, emancipation and mutuality to legitimise the different practices. Collaboration in the context of teacher education discourses has a tendency to foreground the ideals of teachers taking charge of their own learning through a process of reflective activities or conversations with other educators who share the same vision and passion. All three tropes present the assumption that collaboration practices are valued equally by teachers and researchers alike, but in reality, learning agendas may differ because each practice will be shaped by broader institutional practices and not just by the will of individuals. So, the intention of deconstructing of the three tropes of collaboration in this section was to highlight some of the key issues and themes in the literature which need to be problematised. The analysis has highlighted the various 'rules' or 'gold standards' for collaboration which have shaped current practices of teacher education, but these tropes for collaboration often hide the power inequity which exists between the teachers and researchers. Collaboration discourses appear to emphasise equity and mutuality, yet they construct borders that exclude at the same time they include: hence the

question also emerges, who has the right to privilege particular tropes of collaboration in teacher education discourse?

Collaboration: Key Themes in Teacher Education Research

I have so far discussed why collaboration has many guises in teacher education discourses, and how each storyline constructs its own set of rules to privilege a particular discourse of collaboration. As I have already pointed out, the term collaboration has been used to justify a multitude of collective activities within the setting of the classroom, staff room, school, community and beyond (Franklin et al. 2004). Furthermore, because of what the word collaboration conveys, the practice is often welcomed and goes unchallenged by educators who are looking for practical ways to solve classroom problems. However, recent studies have suggested that professional development practices have taken on a political purpose in that they now take place “within contexts of increasing government intervention for the purpose of ‘accountability’ and ‘performativity’” (Day and Sachs 2004, p. 4) in many countries. So, collaboration as a social practice is becoming increasingly political and highly featured in government policies shaping professional development activities. Drawing on Foucault’s idea of panopticon, it could be argued that collaboration has become a way for government bodies to control and monitor more closely how educators learn as professionals. So, as collaboration gains status and legitimacy as a social practice in education literature and policy discourses, the greater the need for educators to challenge some of the underlying assumptions that underpin the concept.

Examining Collaboration as Professional Collegiality

This section examines some of the key research studies that have examined collaboration as a practice in the context of continuing professional development (CPD) literature for teachers with a view to identifying the key themes that have been featured in the context of educational research, the objective is to examine critically how different sociocultural and political explanations for the success or failure of collaboration practices in different educational settings have been presented. Another objective is to identify the body of work that has been done in the area of professional collaboration to highlight the work that still needs to be done in order to fully understand the politics of collaboration in contemporary educational settings.

Many researchers who have conducted studies about collaboration have presented their own interpretations of the term. Hargreaves’ (1994) research suggests that the terms collaboration and collegiality imply two different types of practices, but the terms are used interchangeably in CPD discourses to cover a broad spectrum of activities from team teaching, co-planning to mentoring and collaborative action

research. Hargreaves (1994) presents his understanding of ‘true’ collaboration as a type of sustainable partnership based on mutuality and the assumption is made that the power relations between the collaborators are equal. He compares ‘true’ collaboration with contrived collegiality, which he defines as a form of implemented partnership that is managed by principals and school managers (Hargreaves 1994, 2003). The table shows what Hargreaves’ perceives as key features of true collaboration and contrived collegiality in the context of professional development practices for teachers [adapted from Hargreaves (1994, p. 192) (Table 3.1)].

Hargreaves’ (1994) understanding of how collaboration practices are implemented in an educational setting suggests that collaboration as a term has different meanings and these meanings are shaped by the institutional practices and the social context. Hargreaves’ (1994) study is useful for educators who are interested in understanding more about collaboration as a professional practice because he argues ‘true’ collaboration is not easy to achieve (Hargreaves 1994). However, Hargreaves’ approach in analysing collaboration inevitably leads to the positioning of one form of collaboration practice as being better than another (true collaboration versus contrived collegiality). In reality, collaboration is likely to be much more complex than the two types of practices presented by Hargreaves. Building a typology of collaboration practices provides a contextual understanding of why collaboration practices work or fail, but it does not question why collaboration practices exist in the first place.

Another common theme in the research examining collaboration practices in the field of education is to identify sets of individual or personal factors as barriers inhibiting successful collaboration. In Siskin’s (1994) study, collaboration is defined as a “realm” of professional life. In this context, collaboration is constructed as a form of personal connection to the profession and individuals play a key role in enabling or constraining collaboration practices. In both Hargreaves’ and Siskin’s studies of collaboration, it seems that teachers are positioned as a ‘powerless’ group who are coerced into collaboration with school or university colleagues. This approach focuses on individuals as problems for collaboration and suggests that levels of collaboration are determined by the interconnectedness of individuals within a social context. Siskin’s (1994) study positions collaboration as a cultural problem determined by individual beliefs and institutional cultures. For example, explanations for “problems” in collaboration are positioned as cultural complexities between institutions and contrived collegiality is constructed as ‘forced’ collaboration in which powerful individuals (e.g. managers) within an institution supervise

Table 3.1 Features of collaboration

True collaboration	Contrived collegiality
Spontaneous	Administratively regulated
Voluntary	Compulsory
Pervasive across time and space	Fixed in time and space
Development-oriented	Implementation-oriented
Unpredictable	Predictable

and control collaboration practices (Hargreaves 1994; Holliday 1994; Hu 2002; Leonard 2002; Siskin 1994). Both Hargreaves' (1994) and Siskin's (1994) approach to studying collaboration offers an insight into the problems of initiating and sustaining collaboration practices, but they overlook the powerful political and social contextual factors that drive collaboration in an educational setting.

Examining Collaboration Through a Critical Lens

In her studies of school-university collaboration, Burns (1999) presents collaborative action research as a way for educators to explore issues together to inform and improve practice. This understanding presents collaboration as an opportunity for educators to cooperate as a research community in resolving educational problems as a team. Collaboration is presented as a social learning process to facilitate teacher development to generate knowledge and understanding of practice (Burns 1999; Burns and Richards 2009). Collaboration for professional development can take many forms including collaborative action research, narrative inquiry, cooperative development, team teaching and so on (Burns and Richards 2009). Teachers can collaborate with colleagues, students or university researchers, but it is recognised that collaboration between teachers and university researchers is the most difficult to facilitate because of the power inequities in the relationship (Burns 1999). However, studies which have examined the challenges of facilitating school-university collaboration seldom problematise the theoretical frameworks underpinning each collaboration approach. For example challenges for collaboration are often presented in these studies as practical problems such as teachers not having enough time to do school-based research, attend meetings regularly with university collaborators, limited access to resources, having differing school culture to collaborators, teachers' attitudes and differing expectations among teachers and facilitators and so forth (Burns 1999; Johnston 2009; Oja and Smulyan 1989; Ponte 2002). Broader sociopolitical factors shaping collaboration are not always challenged in studies that adopt a more pragmatic approach to examining collaboration. In contrast, in another study conducted by Leonard (2002) in the US, it was identified how learning communities were constructed in the context of schools. Collaboration relationships are presented in this study as being complex and problematic. The study also suggests that collaboration is likely to be mired in customary practices if it is advocated in education policy, but without adequate support given to teachers. For instance, if collaboration is 'enforced' by policymakers, teachers are likely to be resistant to adopting the practice. So, collaboration in Leonard's (2002) study presents differing cultural norms across departments as a reason as to why collaboration practices fails. Leonard's study challenges the view that collaboration is always empowering. The teachers in the study claimed that they did not regard collaboration as empowering and they did not perceive it as a way to build collegial trust or improve school practices. The teachers' views of collaboration in the study contest the rhetoric that presents collaboration practice as

being ‘good’ and beneficial for educators. Furthermore, in Leonard’s study (2002), the teachers were also positioned as being ‘individualistic’ in their professional outlook and thus resisted collaboration with colleagues. What the study suggests is that collaboration at school level is difficult to achieve because there may be conflicting forces at play. For example, within a school, there may be a ‘toxic’ culture which can defy individual efforts towards educational improvement.

In another case study of collaboration practice Lefever-Davis et al. (2007) explored how collaboration between a university and two high schools in the United States was enacted. Adopting a sociocultural perspective, the authors present the view that conditions for collaboration and the historical relationships between the schools and the university have a significant bearing on the type of partnership achieved in terms of equity and mutuality. Factors which contribute to successful collaboration are presented as having shared vision of simultaneous renewal and maintaining active and open communication between all partners. Lefever-Davis et al. (2007) present individuals and cultures as being the key factors determining the outcomes of collaboration between university and schools including faculties, student population and the community. The study suggests that collaboration is presented as an important facet of relationship building, but is often not apparent for several reasons. Lefever-Davis et al. (2007) suggest that the main problem for collaboration is the relationship between the university and school which is not ‘truly collaborative’, for example when teachers perceive the university professors to be the experts. Lefever-Davis et al. (2007) argue that teachers and researchers have to challenge past historical paradigms concerning positioning to establish mutuality in the alliance. However, what is not foregrounded in this study is how ownership of the project is shaped by social and political factors, beyond the control of individuals.

In Somekh’s (1994) study of collaborative action research between a university and a school in the United Kingdom, the following factors were presented as affecting the outcomes of collaboration: the perceived power differential construed by the education community; how the relationship is set up between the teachers and university researchers; and what contributions are made by each partner in the collaboration process. In this study, successful collaboration was construed as achieving ‘mutuality’ and ‘equity’ in the distribution of power and ownership of knowledge between the partners. Somekh (1994) used the metaphor ‘inhabiting each other’s castles’ to define her understanding of mutuality in collaborative action research. The study foregrounds the need to study collaboration practice in a situated context and for researchers to critically examine the interplay of power and recognition of multiple realities in a partnership. Collaboration is presented in Somekh’s study as a delicate process of power negotiation between researchers and teachers, who are positioned as equal owners of research. Somekh’s (1994) understanding of collaboration is for researchers to apply strategies to reduce the power differentials by positioning teachers as key project members in the CAR project and to publish research with teachers.

The above studies examined collaboration and partnership based on interviews with the participants. Although these studies provide an insight into understanding the problems of collaboration, they do not examine how collaboration is

co-constructed or how practice is shaped by broader sociocultural factors operating in society. In another case study about collaboration, Davison's (2006) offers an insight into how collaboration can be understood through examining discourse as textual data. In this study of collaboration between English as a second language (ESL) and classroom teachers in a culturally and linguistically diverse elementary school in Taiwan (Davison 2006), collaboration was constructed as a set of orientations. The study used discourse analysis to analyse teacher talk to evaluate the different stages of collaboration as demonstrated by the teachers collaborating in an ESL context. Orientations towards collaboration were presented as five differing stages from pseudocompliance to creative co-construction:

Stage 1: Pseudocompliance or passive resistance

Stage 2: Compliance

Stage 3: Accommodation

Stage 4: Convergence (and some co-option)

Stage 5: Creative co-construction from Davison (2006)

Davison's (2006) study suggests that the level and outcomes of professional collaboration are dependent on how teachers 'understand' collaboration and on the sociocultural context. For example, Davison (2006) found that in less effective collaboration, the ESL teacher was seen as another pair of hands or a subordinate to the class teacher in the classroom. The study suggests that for collaboration to be implemented effectively in an educational setting, collaboration as a practice has to extend beyond teachers producing teaching materials together. Collaboration in this study appears as neither easy nor unproblematic. What is proposed in the study is that collaboration is more likely to succeed if there are greater opportunities for critical reflection and discussion of different views between the teachers (Davison 2006). This study highlighted some of the complexities in negotiating collaboration across departments within a school.

All the case studies discussed in this section so far have highlighted some of the key themes and issues concerning different types of professional collaboration in educational research. These studies have also shown some of the ongoing tensions and complexities in negotiating equal power relations in collaborative practices. Moreover, they have highlighted that there is currently limited research illuminating the complexities of collaboration, including research that can help educators understand how collaborative practices are constructed and negotiated in contemporary educational contexts.

Deconstructing Collaboration in Hong Kong's CPD Policy Discourses

To provide a contextual understanding of how collaboration may be understood by teachers and researchers in this book's case study, this section examines some of the key discourses that have shaped collaboration practices in the Hong Kong

sociocultural context. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, there have been major educational reforms in Hong Kong, and school-university collaboration has featured strongly in Hong Kong's educational policy discourses. The main objective of this section is to provide the reader with a contextual understanding of how collaboration is presented in the key professional development policy discourses shaping practice and how teachers perceive professional development activities in the context of curriculum reform in Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong, professional development courses follow two modes. The predominant mode is seminars and workshops organised and funded by the Education Bureau (EDB), the Hong Kong government's authority that oversees education. Tertiary institutions in Hong Kong usually bid to run the courses for teachers. The other mode of professional development activities is school-based in which schools can apply for funding to organise 'in-house' professional development for staff. Schools are required to organise at least three staff development days in each academic year and it is common for schools to invite teaching consultants from the tertiary institutions to lead workshops. In the past decade, there has been a trend towards school-university collaboration as a mode of professional development activities, but this is still not common practice. In terms of teachers' perception of professional development activities in the context of reform, studies indicate that teachers in Hong Kong tend to perceive the goal of professional development activities as predominantly serving the purpose of implementing government policies rather than promoting their own individual needs or interests (Cheng et al. 2004; Wong 2005). It has also been suggested that the provision of professional development activities is perceived by teachers to be 'policy-led' or 'provider-led' (Wong 2005). One of the reasons for this could be because in Hong Kong, all teachers are *required* to attend at least 50 hours of continuing professional development (CPD) in each school year, so many schools tend to enrol teachers on the training courses organised by the Education Bureau (EDB is the government body responsible for education policies in HK). As CPD is mandatory, attendance is always officially recorded by the EDB and the school. Furthermore, courses are often organised on Saturdays to minimise disruption to school's teaching schedule. A study (Wong 2005) found that many Hong Kong teachers perceive continuing professional activities organised by the school or EDB to be 'a waste of time' because the input of the seminars and workshops are often not tailored to meet individual needs or the school context. Wong (2005) and other researchers suggest that the predominant practice of professional development in Hong Kong is the top-down and one-size-fits-all model and found that a majority of teachers in Hong Kong participate in professional development activities to acquire practical rather than theoretical knowledge of new practices, but this is not always achieved (Cheng et al. 2004; Wong 2005). What these studies indicate is that professional development activities are predominantly shaped by the government's vision for teachers rather than to actualise what teachers want to learn. To summarise, the professional development research conducted in Hong Kong suggest that teachers do not generally view existing practices of professional development activities highly and they are critical of 'enforced' professional development activities which they feel are

designed to implement the Government's vision for the curriculum reform. Teachers also appear to be critical of activities which advocate idealistic pedagogical theories and offer them little practical support. Thus, in the context of this book, one of the research foci is to examine how teachers understand collaborative action research as a professional development practice in the context of assessment reform in second language education.

I now examine how the tropes of collaboration have been presented in Hong Kong's teacher education discourses since 1999 (a new wave of education reform was launched by the first chief executive of Hong Kong after the handover in 1997). As indicated earlier, the notion of collaboration has permeated education reform policy documents and literature related to teacher learning and professional development produced in the last 10 years. Collaboration has been construed as a "way forward" to make professional development more 'relevant', school-based and as a key mechanism to break "teacher isolation" (ACTEQ 2003; Cheng et al. 2001). For example, in a Hong Kong study that examined the impact of the education reform on Hong Kong teachers, the 'new' teacher is presented as the key to successful implementation of the curriculum reforms. The 'new' teacher is construed in the literature as a professional who is committed to networking and collaboration:

With the support of information technology and networking and work with peer teachers, students, parents, other experts and the community so that teaching and learning can extend beyond the boundaries of one class or one school to an entire network of local and international learners...effective teachers should be proficient in all aspects of school functions, including the technical, economic, human-social, political, cultural, and educational at the individual, community, society, and international level (Cheng et al. 2001, p. 7).

This construction of the 'new' teacher presents collaboration (with students, colleagues and the community) as 'natural' and 'desirable' for teaching professionals in Hong Kong. The assumption made in the above quotation is that teachers can perform all the roles unproblematically. In some CPD discourses, the teacher is construed as a professional who is accountable to the self, the profession, students, parents and the wider community. Networking is 'normalised' as a professional practice which is 'good' for teachers. From this perspective, collaboration is constructed not as an option, but as a professional commitment in the discourse, and collaborative practices are packaged as something 'new' and 'necessary' for school and university educators.

It seems that collaboration in teacher education discourse in Hong Kong is predominantly presented as a 'new vision', 'new learning culture' and 'new paradigm' (ACTEQ 2003; Cheng 2002; Education Commission 2000; EMB 2008). ACTEQ, the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications, is the current official and authoritative body regulating the professional development practices of teachers in Hong Kong. The following excerpts show how collaboration is construed in the document:

Collaboration and networking are essential in improving teacher effectiveness (ACTEQ 2003, p. 7).

Also, teachers as professionals believe in sharing and teamwork. They believe that it is important for teachers to establish and maintain collaborative relationships with school administrators and colleagues, with students and their parents (ACTEQ 2003, p. 8).

Collaboration in the policy document is 'normalised' even though what is proposed implies greater workloads for teachers. It also constructs a view that teachers in Hong Kong will be not able to meet the demands of the 'new' globalised world without change in current professional development practice (ACTEQ 2003, 2006). Furthermore, the discourse of change is dominant in the text, and marginalising those teachers who do not embrace the 'new' professional development practices proposed by ACTEQ by positioning them as 'ineffective' (ACTEQ 2003, 2006). In reform policy documents, what can be seen is a binary in the texts juxtaposing 'new' practices of professional development as 'better' for the implementation of the new curriculum. For example, the texts privilege particular views of professional development practices and these views appear unchallenged in the texts and are presented as 'truths'. The following excerpt is an example of how the formation of learning communities is 'normalised' in this government document driving professional development practices in Hong Kong:

ACTEQ shares the common understanding that reforms in education are effective only when they are undertaken by a teaching force with high professional quality. In a nutshell, ACTEQ recommends that teacher education institutions should be constructed as learning communities favourable to developing teachers' capacity for lifelong learning...In the realm of continuing professional development, ACTEQ recommends a system that recognises and facilitates teachers' efforts to continuously refresh and upgrade themselves, as it is done in most major professions (ACTEQ 2003, Foreword)

Teacher education is constructed in the text as being 'lifelong' and 'continuous'. Continual professional development of teachers is 'regulated' in the text as a 'personal commitment to the profession'. What is not foregrounded in the text is how these 'new' practices of teacher development activities such as participating in collaborative action research projects with universities, have increased the actual hours of work for teachers in Hong Kong. Collaboration practices are constructed not as 'additional' work for teachers, but as part and parcel of teaching. In this connection, the discourse of collaboration in Hong Kong's policy documents appears to value the public persona of the teacher over the personal, and the discourse on planned educational change presents collaboration as a way for teachers to resolve problems rather than to raise problems with the reform agenda. Thus, what is constructed as common sense is actually ideologically invested. For example, teachers are positioned as agents of change, to change students and practices relating to assessment. Collaboration in the ACTEQ policy document is presented as "essential in improving teacher effectiveness" (teachers who do not collaborate are ineffective) and as a professional belief (teachers who do not believe in sharing and teamwork are not professionals). The quotations from the policy document suggest that these discourses regulate the professional development practices of teachers in Hong Kong by positioning collaboration as a professional 'need' and 'intrinsically good' for education.

In another example, we can see school teachers are positioned as being ‘deficient’ in academic scholarship while university teachers are positioned as ‘knowledge providers’ and ‘auditors’ of professional development activities in the ACTEQ policy document:

Teacher education institutions should work in close relationship with the schools and the government in supporting teachers’ CPD and in promoting the use of the generic Teacher Competency Framework (TCF). By incorporating their academic scholarship with schools’ practical experience, teacher education institutions are in a good position to work in partnership with schools to plan and design school based and individual continuing professional development (CPD) programmes...They are encouraged to serve the development needs of individual teachers, schools and the profession as a whole (ACTEQ 2003, p. 17).

Thus, the ACTEQ policy document has created particular subject positions for school teachers, university teachers, schools and teacher education institutions, the discourse is legitimising and endorsing a particular practice of school-university collaboration that is regulated by institutional hierarchy.

In all the guises of collaboration discussed in this chapter, the issue of the power differentials between collaborators appears to be a main factor affecting the outcomes of collaboration, but how power is mediated and constituted in school-university collaboration practices has not been examined fully in existing studies about collaboration. Despite the various strategies presented in the literature to achieve mutuality and equity, it has to be recognised that the issue of power is never going to be easy to resolve, especially in the Hong Kong context in which there are very different cultural interpretations of what collaboration might mean to teachers and researchers. However, in adopting a critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework to examine collaboration as a social practice, the issue of power can be problematised to develop an understanding of how beliefs, social relations and identities are situated in collaboration discourses. I believe that the approach adopted in this book provides a much needed space to interrogate the operation of discourse in collaboration to examine how particular worldviews about teacher learning and partnership are presented in a particular sociocultural context (Locke 2004).

Summary

I have explained why I have borrowed Foucault’s (1972) idea of genealogy to trace the tropes to ‘debunk’ some of the grand narratives of collaboration in teacher education discourses. I have also discussed how changing practices of collaboration in an educational context have coincided with changes in educational policies ‘normalising’ learning networks, communities of practice and collaborative action research. The genealogy of the tropes has led to some emerging questions concerning current school-university collaboration practices: why has collaboration been advocated as the goal post for evaluating teacher development in recent years in different sociocultural context and why is this goal post continually shifting?

I have shown how collaboration practices are construed in the educational literature as ways to ‘resolve’ educational problems. However, what is not foregrounded in teacher educational discourses are the underlying theoretical problems of school-university collaboration which need to be considered within a broader context of social-cultural, economical and ideological agendas in operation. The following three chapters aim to show how collaboration negotiated in the contemporary society is not fixed, but shifts according to social-cultural and ideological ideas that permeate the personal, institutional and the broader societal contexts. They also aim to show how language is used in mediating the “operation of power” in collaboration (Somekh 1994). Thus, theories which present a view of collaboration as free from ‘power’ relations are misleading.

In tracing the historical development of collaboration practices in an educational context, this chapter has underscored how problematic and complex they can be. Studies which advocate a particular agenda or world view of collaboration tend not to illuminate the underlying theoretical problems in the practice. This chapter has also highlighted a gap in the literature. I have also shown that despite the growing number of studies advocating the merits of school-university collaboration as professional development practice for in-service teachers, there is still limited research which offers an insight into how collaboration is discursively constructed so there is a need to dig deeper, to explore how teachers and researchers are making sense of school-university collaboration discourses circulating in the current sociocultural contexts. So, in the next three chapters, I hope to make explicit the complexities of understanding collaboration as a theory and practice.

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Chapter 4

Negotiating Beliefs and Practices in School–University Collaboration

Introduction

The notion of teachers and researchers working collectively to build and sustain a professional knowledge base for teaching has received much attention from education researchers in the past four decades (Burns 1999; Groundwater-Smith et al. 2013; Stenhouse 1975), going back to the 1960s in the UK when school–university collaboration around action research was presented as a practice of professional development to encourage teachers to do school-based research and thus to change the positioning of teachers from research subjects to co-researchers (Stenhouse 1975). Since then, collaborative action research (CAR), involving teachers from schools working alongside university researchers, has become a relatively common practice in the professional development of teachers in a wide range of teaching contexts (Burns 2009). But while there has been considerable research published advocating the merits of CAR as professional development for teachers, fewer researchers have examined the practice through a critical lens; and while the issues that have been highlighted in the CAR literature include how university researchers (fail to) acknowledge the research contributions made by teachers-as-researchers, and how university researchers and teachers negotiate and manage their identities whilst engaged in CAR (Johnston 2009; Stewart 2006), these studies were conducted in an adult TESOL context, while collaboration as an overall area of research is under theorised (Davison 2006; Stewart 2006). In particular, there has been little by way of theoretically informed critical analysis of how school teachers and university researchers negotiate beliefs and practice as a team in the context of school–university collaboration (see Chap. 3 for a detailed discussion on the tropes of collaboration in an educational context).

Drawing on Foucault's idea that all truths are socially constructed through language (Foucault 1978, 1991), this chapter examines the discursive formation of collaboration as a system of beliefs by the two teachers (Jennifer and Carol) and three university team members (Ann, Katy and I) working together in a CAR

project at a time when new classroom assessment practices that were being introduced into Hong Kong secondary school. The notion of beliefs refers to the analysis of the explicit word choices, attitudes, beliefs ('truths') stated in the interviews with the teachers and researchers (Fairclough 2001). The focus of this chapter is to trace how the participants in a school–university partnership project enacted collaboration during a key period of educational reforms in Hong Kong assessment reform as a team, more specifically, to examine which order of discourses was drawn upon to rationalise their participation in the project. The interviews and meeting recordings collected from the project were transcribed and analysed as textual data using the critical discourse analysis framework discussed in Chap. 2. To understand how the teachers and researchers made sense of the collaboration experience, the textual data were categorised according to key themes. I focused on identifying how the teachers and researchers talked about their collaboration experience while working as a team. The aim of this step was to identify the categories and frequencies of terms used by the teachers (Cohen et al. 2007) to negotiate school–university partnership as a system of belief and practice. After this, the prominent linguistic features in the interviews, including word choice, metaphors and pronouns, were then analysed. For example, I examined what reasons and purposes for collaboration were foregrounded, backgrounded (mentioned, but inferred meaning) and suppressed (not mentioned at all in the text) in the textual data. The 'links between discursive practices and broader social and cultural developments and structures' (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002, p. 78) in the texts were then critically examined to show how partnership discourse draws on orders of discourse and texts beyond the project context, such as the assessment reform discourse, the school–university partnership discourse, the institutional discourse and the professional development discourse. I should note that the concern of the analysis was not so much to judge the beliefs stated by the teachers and researchers as to explore the ways in which 'truths' foregrounded in the case study shaped the construction of school university collaboration as a social practice.

Fairclough (2001, 2003) relates the discursive construction of beliefs and knowledge in texts to Halliday's ideational function of discourse. In using Fairclough's theory of CDA with Foucault's theory of language, I examined how and why particular constructions of collaboration were enacted in the context of this Hong Kong case study. Fairclough (2003) suggests that representations of events, activities and processes entail choice. Furthermore, Fairclough draws on systemic functional linguistics (SFL) theory in his analysis framework and language is regarded as a semiotic system which is made up of three different layers: discourse-semantics; lexicogrammar and phonology. These three layers are related to each other and in the context of discourse analysis, it involves examining how choices and meanings are made in each layer. With this in mind, grammatical metaphor can be defined broadly as a variation of grammatical forms through which semantic choices are made (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004). Drawing on Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), Fairclough's CDA framework also makes a distinction between the two types of grammatical metaphor, they are interpersonal metaphors (metaphors of mood) and ideational metaphors (metaphors of transitivity); the latter grammatical metaphor is the main focus of

analysis in this chapter because the focus is to examine particular beliefs, reasons and purposes represented in the texts for collaboration. The following questions were used to guide the analysis of the ideational field in the texts:

- What word choices and key terms (e.g. attitudinal words and ideational metaphors) were given prominence/suppressed/backgrounded in the texts to represent the collaboration experience?
- What themes emerged to represent the teachers' and facilitators' understanding of school–university collaboration in the CAR project?

Fairclough (2003) points out that tracing the precise nature and distribution of grammatical metaphors can be seen as one productive way into researching the 'effects' of texts within a particular social order in the process of social change.

Teachers' Beliefs About Assessment Reform and Collaboration

The CAR project took place at a time when key curriculum reforms were being introduced into Hong Kong's education system and new English language classroom assessment practices were being introduced in secondary schools, including in Carol and Jennifer's school (see teachers' background information in Chap. 1). The new assessment component introduced into the Hong Kong English language curriculum was School-based Assessment (SBA). SBA was introduced as part of the learning and teaching process, a key new feature of the practice was students being assessed by their subject teachers. The main rationale for introducing SBA into Hong Kong schools at the time of the reform was to enhance the validity of the public assessment by extending it to include a variety of learning outcomes that cannot be assessed easily through public examinations, e.g. spoken language. SBA marks are now counted towards students' results in the HKDSE Examination at the end of the secondary school (HKEAA 2014) (before the introduction of SBA, students only had one chance to pass the English speaking exam as classroom assessment was not counted towards the final grade). So for Jennifer and Carol, SBA was a new practice.

Green Hill Secondary School (not the real name) is a government-aided school (non-fee paying) situated in a central urban district in Hong Kong, serving students from age 11–16 from the neighbourhood. At the time of the study, the school volunteered to participate in the school–university CAR project with the university which I was working for. The school was established in 1960s and is well known in the community. The school has students from both middle- and working-class social backgrounds. There are more than 50 teachers employed in the school and of that, 95 % have a teaching qualification (in HK, it is not mandatory for teachers to have a teaching qualification before they can work in a school), and more than 50 % of the staff have 10 years or above teaching experience. Both Jennifer and

Carol have taught in the school for more than 6 years at the time of the study, and both were given the responsibility by their principal to initiate and lead the assessment reform in their schools. Jennifer was the head of English language education and Carol was the SBA coordinator. Both teachers said the key reason for why they had participated in the CAR project was because they wanted to understand how to implement the new classroom assessment practices more effectively in the school. Furthermore, Jennifer and Carol were aware that their colleagues felt they needed more support to implement the soon-to-be-mandatory SBA for other subjects (Chinese, Liberal Studies, Visual Arts, etc.), so they joined the project to find out what they could do to prepare for the curriculum reform. As a member of the university team working with the schools, I got to know both teachers well. In this section I examine what beliefs about collaboration were given greater prominence in data by both teachers. The analysis focused on tracing some of the discursive strategies (word choice, key terms, metaphors) employed by Jennifer and Carol to 'legitimise' school–university collaboration as a social event.

How Teachers Enacted the Reform Policy Discourse

I draw on six extracts of textual data to show how beliefs about the newly implemented SBA were constructed and negotiated by Carol and Jennifer. All interviews and meetings were conducted in English, so no translation was required. In Hong Kong, it is not an uncommon practice for ESL teachers to conduct meetings and write emails in English because it is one of the official languages. Furthermore, the teachers in this case study were highly proficient speakers and writers of English. I begin with Jennifer's reasons for choosing their action research topic in Extract 1:

(Extract 1)

Interviewer: why are you interested in the impact of feedback?

Jennifer: We thought it's very important for the students to be aware of their weakness and strength in the group interaction. Because in junior forms it is basic skills for them to have training, and after they go to the senior forms or have the SBA training, they will be more aware of themselves. So feedback is very important for both junior forms and senior forms. We want to have the pilot study first, so after we know about the curriculum and we can decide for the whole form, whole junior form.

(Jennifer, Green Hill Secondary School)

In Extract 1, Jennifer unfolded her construction of classroom assessment practices by emphasising the importance for students to have feedback from teachers for SBA to work in her school, this was presented in the context of 'training' students to notice their strengths and weaknesses when speaking in English in the group

interactions. Her construction of feedback seemed to draw on the assessment for learning discourse presented in the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority's (HKEAA) SBA handbook for teachers: "Teachers should use the assessment activities not only to make judgements about student standards..., but also to give feedback to students about specific aspects of their oral language skills so that they can improve for the next assessment" (HKEAA 2014, p. 5). On one level, Jennifer's beliefs about assessment complied with the reform goals, but on another level, Jennifer also emphasised the importance of 'training' students so that they will perform well in the new assessment practice and this notion of 'training' students seemed to suggest that Jennifer was also drawing on the more 'traditional' exam discourse of preparing students for tests, which was not the intention of SBA. In fact, a key reason for introducing SBA into Hong Kong's curriculum was to move English teachers away from the traditional exam-oriented culture of training students mechanically for a one-off second language oral exam, and towards a more authentic assessment practice where students are assessed through a variety of classroom-based speaking tasks and over a longer period of time. As stated in the SBA handbook for teachers, the aim of the new assessment practice is to ensure stronger congruence between teaching, learning and assessment in the second language classroom in Hong Kong (HKEAA 2014), however, Jennifer's reference to training and the focus on performance (rather than learning) perhaps reflected a more traditional and exam-oriented understanding of assessment. So Jennifer embraced the language of the new SBA, but her beliefs about teaching and learning at the time of the reform were still predominantly shaped by the more traditional understanding of assessment. This showed there were some tensions in how Jennifer made sense of the new assessment practices being implemented in her school in the early stages of the reform.

While the teachers were generally positive about the new SBA practices in the interview data, they also identified challenges in implementing SBA in their school context. In Extract 2, Jennifer explained the difficulties in giving feedback to a large class (40+ students) of students:

(Extract 2)

This is the pilot study. We have tried this in whole class. We really find it difficult to give feedback and do the conference for the large class size. So we want to try this one for the small group first. After we know how to implement for this scheme into large class, maybe we can divide them into groups, ask teachers, more teachers to participate. That is to say, we find it hard to do by one teacher or two teachers.

(Jennifer, Green Hill Secondary School)

In Extract 2, the action research project was again construed as a 'testing ground' for new SBA practices including giving students feedback, conferencing and grouping learners for speaking activities. These new practices were presented as important and beneficial for students in the assessment *for* learning discourse, which was one of the assessment frameworks shaping Hong Kong's SBA practices. However, there were also some tensions in the teachers' comments. On the one

hand, Jennifer stated that giving teacher feedback was good for learners; on the other hand, she also expressed concerns about the additional workload the new assessment practice would create for teachers. It was also interesting to note that Jennifer did not challenge the SBA discourse in her comments, for example, problems arising from the implementation of new assessment policy. Problems identified were presented as student-based or teacher-based. The tensions of implementing a new assessment practice in the Hong Kong context was also present in Carol's comments in Extract 3. She explained the challenges experienced by her students when she introduced the action research intervention:

(Extract 3)

My students, they just want to get the task finished and they can't really interact. It's quite common that they just take turns in giving their ideas when doing the discussion. So, I think that's another problem. They did not know much about the skills of discussing [ideas] with each other. Also, another problem is that maybe the teachers tend to expect too much from the students because the students are just in Form 2 [key stage 3] level. So, maybe next time if we can do it again, maybe we'll tell, we'll focus on one or two strategies each time because in the [SBA] assessment form we have to assess 4 main areas: pronunciation and delivery, communication skills, vocabulary and language patterns and ideas and organization, so maybe I just focus on 2 only, and then let them know that we look at these areas. Then maybe students are more focused and they can try and do better in those areas.

(Carol, Green Hill Secondary School)

In Extract 3, Carol expressed challenges in introducing the action research intervention in the context of her class. In particular, she was concerned about the students' performance and assessing them using the new assessment criteria. In the past, teachers were not required to assess students' oral proficiency so for Carol, as the school's SBA coordinator, she was trying to figure out how best to use the assessment criteria and be fair to the students. For example, she was concerned that her expectations of the students' speaking performance during the group interactions were too high. Even though Carol had highlighted some of the problems experienced by her learners, she did not question or challenge the assessment reform discourse. Jennifer also presented teachers as being responsible for addressing the challenges brought about by the reform:

(Extract 4)

Yes, we have tried this in feedback in drama lessons. We have tried a little bit before, some lessons before, feedback with the whole class. After they do some individual presentation, teachers immediately give feedback, ask students to give comments. But maybe they are just Form 2 level, they cannot pick up some mistakes, or weaknesses or strength from other students. They can just say good or bad, something like that, very simple response, and simple feedback. For this plan, we like to give more guidance for the students, so they can find out strength, rather than saying good or bad.

(Jennifer, Green Hill Secondary School)

Extracts 1–4 highlighted some of the tensions experienced by the teachers in negotiating their beliefs about the new SBA practice introduced in Hong Kong

schools during a period of reform in Hong Kong, including the challenges of enacting the new SBA policy.

How the Teachers Enacted Collaboration with the University

I now focus on exploring what discursive strategies were employed by the teachers in the case study to represent the collaboration experience, for example, how Jennifer and Carol gave meaning to their participation in the project.

In the interviews with the teachers, both Carol and Jennifer described the CAR project as a ‘pilot study’ or an ‘experiment’.

(Extract 5)

We would like to increase students’ awareness, so carrying out feedback on their peer evaluation or teachers’ feedback. Because *in the past* we had no idea how to deal with this and *with the help of the University*, we gave out extra worksheets and did video recordings with the students with just a small group because there are a large number of students here so we tried out in a kind of experiment with two groups of students and to find out if it is possible to have the video recording and the feedback session in school.

(Jennifer, Green Hill Secondary School)

In Extract 5, Jennifer constructed a binary (*before* and *after* collaboration) to contrast the past and the present practices of assessing students to show how she had ‘transformed’ *after* collaboration with the university. The construction of the binary can be thought of as an emphatic discursive strategy to foreground how Jennifer wanted the collaboration practice to be perceived—she wanted to show how she had changed her understanding of SBA as a teacher. In this way, Jennifer presented the school–university collaboration as a ‘transformative’ experience for herself to show how the experience had changed the way she practiced assessment in her classroom. Jennifer’s comment was interesting because at the time of the project, SBA was only introduced into English language curriculum in the first phase of the reform, and to some extent, both Jennifer and Carol must have felt some pressure in being the ‘vanguards’ of SBA in their school. Both teachers presented the CAR as an opportunity to learn new assessment practices with the support of the university educators, and in presenting the CAR project as a ‘kind of experiment’, it suggested that Jennifer believed the new practices that she was implementing were ‘conditional’. So in representing the CAR project as ‘a trial’, Jennifer was foregrounding the temporal status of the collaboration between the school and the university as well as the tentative relationship between the teachers and the university researchers as collaborators. Furthermore, Jennifer’s hesitancy to commit to the action research intervention she described in Extract 5 (i.e. letting students view their performance followed by teacher feedback) perhaps suggested that full implementation of the new practice was dependent on students’ performance after the trial. So the data suggested that Jennifer’s beliefs about

collaboration were predominantly pragmatic and institutional, and this belief was also shared by Carol:

(Extract 6)

I think for the university they came to the school and then talked with us and then we show them the progress and they gave very valuable advice...to us and see whether we can use [these ideas] another time.

(Carol, Green Hill Secondary School)

In Extract 6, Carol constructed both a pragmatic and an institutional understanding of collaboration by positioning the university facilitators' institutional identity as the experts and advisors who came to the school to support the teachers. For Carol, the CAR had a practical purpose—it was to help teachers explore new assessment ideas (e.g. how feedback might help students improve their speaking skills) in their school context. Carol also had very distinct beliefs about the role of 'advisors' from the tertiary institution. The data indicated that the teachers foregrounded the institutional identities of the university facilitators by presenting experts and advisors. The collaboration was perceived to be predominantly a professional development activity for the teachers and a form of institutional cooperation to exchange intellectual resources and knowledge. In Extract 7, the university educators are presented as the 'professionals' by the teachers:

(Extract 7)

We want to get different views from other universities or the Education Bureau because they are professional and they can give us a lot of advice and comments on our learning and teaching here.

(Jennifer, Green Hill Secondary School)

The data showed that the teachers in this Hong Kong school–university partnership project primarily perceived collaboration as a professional development activity to learn new teaching strategies to resolve practical and technical problems arising from the implementation of assessment reform in their school. School–university collaboration was discursively constructed to mean gaining practical support, professional knowledge and expertise from the university. Another understanding of collaboration which is also foregrounded was the expected learning outcomes of the CAR project by the teachers—to learn how to give feedback to improve their students' performance in SBA. This is highlighted in the following extracts by Carol:

(Extract 8)

The purpose of this research one of the purpose is that we want students to get benefits from feedback, how they can do better group interaction in the next cycle

(Carol, Green Hill Secondary School)

(Extract 9)

As we want to make comparison of students, the first time they will have feedback conference without looking at the video and they aware of the mistakes by their memory. But

after the 2nd assessment they are going to have a feedback conference that they are aware of, they would be aware of the weaknesses by watching the video. Then they can pick up their mistakes and learn by themselves through feedback.

(Carol, Green Hill Secondary School)

Carol foregrounds the CAR as a professional development practice and she presents the action research as an experimental study to compare students ‘before’ and ‘after’ each action research cycle. This suggests that the teachers had a pragmatic and technical understanding of action research and perceived the school–university collaboration as a practice to try out curriculum innovations. So the data showed that both teachers shared an understanding that the purpose of the collaborative project was to help them implement the new assessment policy more effectively, the researchers were positioned as the knowledge providers, the people who will ‘monitor’ the ‘appropriate’ implementation of the reform policy in the schools. The analysis of the text suggests that the teachers in this case study perceived collaboration with the university as a way to acquire professional knowledge and practical skills to improve assessment practices at Green Hill Secondary School.

In the texts examined so far, the teachers (and researchers) in the study present the practice of SBA in an unproblematic way, for example, feedback and the discourse of SBA are not scrutinised by the teachers or researchers in the context of policy discourse. It is assumed that giving teacher feedback to students is achievable and beneficial for learners. The analysis suggests that ‘feedback will improve students’ performance’ at Green Hill Secondary School was a belief shared by the teachers and researchers in the study. Table 4.1 shows a summary of the binaries that revolve around ‘past’ and ‘present’ practices constructed by the two teachers.

The binaries constructed by the teachers served to normalise and legitimise the new practice of assessment and policy in schools. In Table 4.1, the new practice of giving feedback in the context of SBA was presented by Carol and Jennifer as beneficial for students and old practices, such as focusing on marks and grades were presented as ineffective. So the analysis of the textual data from the study showed that the way the teachers talked about SBA predominantly reflected discourses

Table 1 Teachers’ construction of past and present assessment practices

Before the CAR project	After the CAR project
“we had no idea how to deal with this” “students aren’t aware what...the problem or mistakes they have made” “they cannot pick up some mistakes, or weaknesses or strength from other students” “In past record, we don’t do that, just verbally tell students what they need to improve in what we do usual practice” “students just concern about their marks, or how the teachers grade them”	“with the help of the University...we tried out in a kind of experiment” “teachers can give their judgment or feedback to the students and then...next time students can do it better” “We would like to increase students’ awareness” “I think we want to help students to learn their mistakes” “they can pick up their mistakes and learn by themselves through feedback”

foregrounded in Hong Kong's curriculum policy documents including the discourse shaping new assessment practices. Both teachers did not appear to question or problematise the ideology of the new assessment policy. However, there were tensions in the data which suggested the teachers harboured some concerns about introducing SBA in their teaching contexts, their concerns reflected questions about implementing an assessment for learning practice within a learning culture which was predominantly exam-oriented. They did not say it explicitly, but they did ask questions about the feasibility of assessing group discussions and giving quality oral feedback when teaching 40 or more learners in a class (When SBA was first introduced in HK, many secondary schools had class size of 40–45 learners).

Discussion

The analysis of the data has shown that the teachers' beliefs about assessment in the case study were predominantly located in their beliefs about feedback and student learning. These beliefs reflected the discourses about teaching and learning that were prominently foregrounded in Hong Kong's curriculum policy documents at the time, including the assessment for learning discourse which underpinned the rationale for SBA. So improving feedback in the context of SBA was constructed as a belief to validate the CAR project with the university in the text. The analysis also suggests that the teachers enacted the trope of improved practice in the way they positioned themselves as 'learners' of SBA. For example, the teachers viewed the CAR project as an opportunity to gain 'new' practical support and information about SBA from the university facilitators. So teachers' beliefs about collaboration were predominantly constructed around the need for teachers to figure out how to help learners improve their performance in the context of SBA. Another discursive strategy used by the teachers to make sense of the collaboration experience was highlighting their transformation by constructing a binary to talk about past and present assessment practices foregrounded past assessment practices as 'ineffective' and new practices as necessary and better for students at Green Hill Secondary School. Change in practice was constructed by the teachers as inevitable and beneficial for learners. In the discourse, they did not appear to challenge the broader curriculum reform policy and ideology shaping assessment practices in schools. The analysis of the teachers' beliefs suggests that the collaboration practice constructed in this study reflected the importance of achieving perceived practical goals over social and power equity. Although the teachers' assumptions about feedback and learning were not scrutinised in the textual data, they did harbour uncertainties concerning the implementation of SBA in the context of their school, and so their understanding of SBA was at times in conflict with the discourse of assessment for learning which they embraced. So the teachers experienced tensions in negotiating their beliefs as language teachers, SBA assessors and collaborators in this case study.

How the Researchers Enacted Collaboration with the School Teachers

In this section I explore how the two university teacher educators (Anna and me) enacted collaboration in the school–university project with Green Hill Secondary School. Anna and I were both employed as English language teacher educators in the same university at the time of the study, and we were both involved in projects working with teachers in the community. At the time of the study, both of us wanted to learn more about how SBA, which was a new practice for us as well, could be implemented in second language classrooms in Hong Kong schools. More specifically, Anna was interested in examining how teacher feedback could help students improve their spoken language skills so the project leader invited to work with schools who were interested in examining this topic area for their action research project.

Anna and I had met Jennifer and Carol a number of times at the university to discuss their action research project, and we also visited them during and after the action research cycles so we got to know both teachers well. The data discussed in this section were drawn from the follow-up interviews conducted with two members of the university research team who worked closely with Jennifer and Carol during and after the CAR project—Anna (a CAR facilitator) and Katy (the project manager). Katy was the project manager of the CAR project and her main role was to provide technical and additional support to the facilitators and teachers working in each action research sub-group. In the context of this study, Katy communicated directly with the school principals to invite teachers to join the CAR project, helped organise the initial meetings at the university between the facilitators (e.g. Anna and I) and the teachers (Jennifer and Carol). In the context of the discussion, the terms ‘facilitators’ are used to represent the beliefs constructed by *both* Anna and me as we worked as a team.

Beliefs About Collaboration with Teachers

Studies on CAR have suggested that the problems with having an outside researcher work with teachers was providing the ‘right’ type of support for teachers during the collaboration process (Burns 1999). In this study, rather than simply looking for practical problems concerning the facilitation process, I examined what discursive devices the university educators (the CAR facilitators and the project manager) used to make sense of the collaboration experience with the school teachers as a way to identify how beliefs about school–university partnership were negotiated during the project. This section is important because it also shows critical self-reflection in how we as a team co-constructed our beliefs about collaboration in the project. The textual data analysed in this section are drawn from

the interviews with Anna and Katy and a chain of emails exchanged between the facilitating team during the collaboration with the Green Hill Secondary School.

In Extract 10, a prominent discursive strategy used by the CAR facilitation team was to foreground the belief that collaboration practices should reflect high support and be democratic. The democratic discourse is contrasted with terms implying forced or coerced collaboration in the extract:

(Extract 10)

I gave the teachers lots of information on feedback, examples of research plans, surveys and all sorts of materials. We did a few tasks (in the workshops), even with data analysis, even though they might not have to go into that. Before the interview, there were several emails going back and forwards. They sent their research plans and I made comments, quite tentative about it because you know I am not used to doing this sort of thing and I sent my comments to you, I was saying things like what do you think Cheri, do you think this is too much, too little. I don't want to force people to do things they don't want to do! You would then comment and I would send them the email and you would follow up with a phone call.

(Anna, University Teacher & CAR Facilitator)

In the literature advocating CAR between schools and universities, the facilitator is often presented as a source of intellectual and emotional support for teachers. This discourse was reflected in the collaboration discourse constructed by both the teachers (see previous section) and the facilitators in the case study. The construction of facilitation styles foregrounded in the texts by Anna presented the team's facilitation practice as a mutual and equal relationship between school and university teachers, beliefs about 'good' collaboration facilitation practices were based around the following principles: high levels of practical support, shared decisions and effective communication. In the extract below, Anna foregrounds the importance of the collective identity (the institutional) and a personal approach (non-institutional) in communicating with teachers in collaboration:

(Extract 11)

I think those phone calls, that personal input has really helped make all of the groups really gelled with us, the relationship between the university and the school and the research team in each school, I think the phone calls really made a difference...It's not a question of you and us, but a question of we are co-investigating this together!

(Anna, University Teacher & CAR Facilitator)

The extract above suggested that the facilitators in the CAR case study presented a strong belief that collaboration should be egalitarian and decisions should be shared, for example Anna positioned the teachers as co-investigators. The facilitators' construction of collaboration highly reflected the school-university partnership discourse that foregrounds collaboration as a joint endeavour and a relationship based on the principles of equity, mutuality and shared goals. This is interesting because her construction of the facilitators' identity is different to the teachers' construction (Jennifer and Carol), who positioned the university team members as 'experts' of action research and SBA. Furthermore, while shared goals and ownership of the project were foregrounded by Anna as the principles

underpinning the facilitators' practice, in the teachers' construction of collaboration, distance was maintained in the way the teachers positioned the facilitators as the external 'experts'. So in this CAR project, the university team's construction of collaboration and the facilitators' roles did not align to the teachers' constructions. To illustrate this point further, the project manager Katy also presented school–university collaboration as teamwork:

(Extract 12)

I should say in terms of empowerment, this is what we should have at the back of our minds, we don't want them to think that we will walk with them for the rest of their teaching career, but that we want them to see and feel that they can do it on their own and one day we will leave them and they feel they can walk the road by themselves...confidently. So I see that you know this is something that we hope to achieve.

(Katy, CAR Project Manager)

Katy used the metaphor of 'walking with the teachers' to convey her belief that support in the context of CAR is very important for teachers in the Hong Kong context. Katy presented the facilitators as a guide or a navigator to support teachers in the CAR team. So like Anna, Katy's understanding of school–university collaboration also draws on the discourse of empowerment which foregrounds the belief that school–university collaboration is to help teachers develop confidence to carry out their own school-based research. However, the notions of empowerment and equity were not problematised by Katy in the interview data, the ideals of teacher development through collaboration were presented as inevitable and a necessary process in a teacher's career. For Katy, she presents the ultimate goal of collaboration is to develop teachers' confidence so that they can continue the practice of action research without the support of the university facilitators. So Katy's understanding of collaboration aligned more with the critical and empowerment discourse that foregrounds the importance of teachers having ownership of their action research projects so that the practice is a meaningful experience and sustainable.

A key theme which emerged in the data collected from the facilitating team was the constant tension and struggle experienced by the Anna and me in negotiating our facilitation style while communicating with the teachers via emails or face-to-face. In Extract 13, Anna had just read the teacher's draft action research plan and had made comments for the teachers. In this email, she was asking for the team's input (Katy and me) concerning the revisions made and the appropriateness of the language used in her written feedback to the teachers (her response):

(Extract 13)

To: Cheri, Katy

From: Anna

Dear Cheri and Katy,

My response is attached. I feel they need a bit of help to untangle all the ideas they have. Cheri, could you have a look at my response and see what you think? Is it too much and far too sophisticated for junior forms? Is it too imposing? I don't want to force anyone to do

anything they are not interested in exploring. Please feel free to change it in whatever way you think and then - if you don't mind, as you suggested, would you follow up with a phone call?

(E-mail sent by Anna, lead facilitator of CAR project)

In Extract 12 there were four different questions addressed to the co-facilitators and they concerned the level of revisions and changes that Anna had made in the teachers' action research plans (Jennifer and Carol had sent the plan to Anna and I to ask for feedback). The questions suggested uncertainty and indicated tensions in how Anna negotiated her beliefs about facilitation, for example, the tension in the text revolved around Anna's uncertainty of how much direct input she should give in the construction of the action research plan. It seemed that Anna was uncertain about how much support was considered appropriate by the teachers so she invited Katy and me to help her decide. What was clear from Anna's email was she did not want the teachers (and the co-facilitators) to think she was imposing her ideas on them because this was in conflict with her belief of collaboration. Extract 13 was my response to Anna's email. On the surface, the reply also foregrounded collaboration as a practice of shared decision, but at the same time, the reply emphasised Anna's authority as the lead facilitator in the CAR project:

(Extract 14)

(E-mail sent 05.02.2007)

Perhaps it might be easier to call and speak to them directly. As I worked closely with them in Forum 3, I am happy to do this on Monday and go through the plan with them on the phone and share our ideas with them? It'll give them a chance to ask questions too.

The plan also looks like a case study (1 group of students). I've highlighted some of the points I am not sure about. Perhaps Anna could take a look and see what you think? The MP3 idea is nice, but they want to know if we need this data? Or do we just need the video of the one group (case study)? Perhaps we can help them de-complicate cycle 2?! Step 4 in cycle 2 is where the teacher gives feedback, can they use the same feedback criteria checklist as the students? So students get both teacher and student feedback in cycle 2? Just some thoughts, what do you think Anna?

Cheers,

Cheri

(E-mail sent by Cheri, Co-facilitator of CAR project)

To a certain extent, the email showed that I reinforced the beliefs advocated in Anna's email (shared decision-making and power) by proposing to call the teachers to elicit their views about the changes and to clarify the changes made in the plan. The proposed suggestions were presented as shared ("our ideas") to foreground the 'we' discourse. Like Anna, I also used questions in my email to foreground to present collaboration as a shared decision-making process. I also invited Anna and Katy to comment on the suggestions that I have made in the plan. All the ideas were presented as tentative to emphasise the belief of shared decision-making.

The emails so far provided an illustration of how the university facilitators negotiated collaboration as a team. The data showed the tropes of collaboration we drew upon to make sense of our own practice. What was highly foregrounded in the data collected from the facilitators was the discourses of equity and democracy,

but in practice, there were also contradictions and complexities in how these beliefs were enacted in practice. For example, while the facilitators did not want to be directive or imposing in their facilitation approach, but in practice, we gave a lot of direct input to the teachers because they had requested the support.

Discussion

The analysis of the data in this section has shown that the formation of beliefs about collaboration in the context of the CAR project is highly complex. The data showed that the facilitating team struggled to negotiate a collaboration practice that met the needs of the school teachers as well as one which aligned to the narratives of collaboration from the school–university partnership literature (see Chap. 3). Furthermore, while the research team members did share similar beliefs about collaboration, their understanding was different to the two teachers’ understanding of collaboration. For example, Anna resisted positioning herself as an expert in the context of the case study, but this did not align with the teachers’ beliefs about the collaboration or with the facilitation practice that was enacted in the context of the case study. The analysis showed there were tensions and complexities in the construction of beliefs and actual practices of collaboration in the Hong Kong case study. The following figure summarises the different discourses which shaped the construction of beliefs about collaboration in the Hong Kong CAR project (Fig. 4.1).

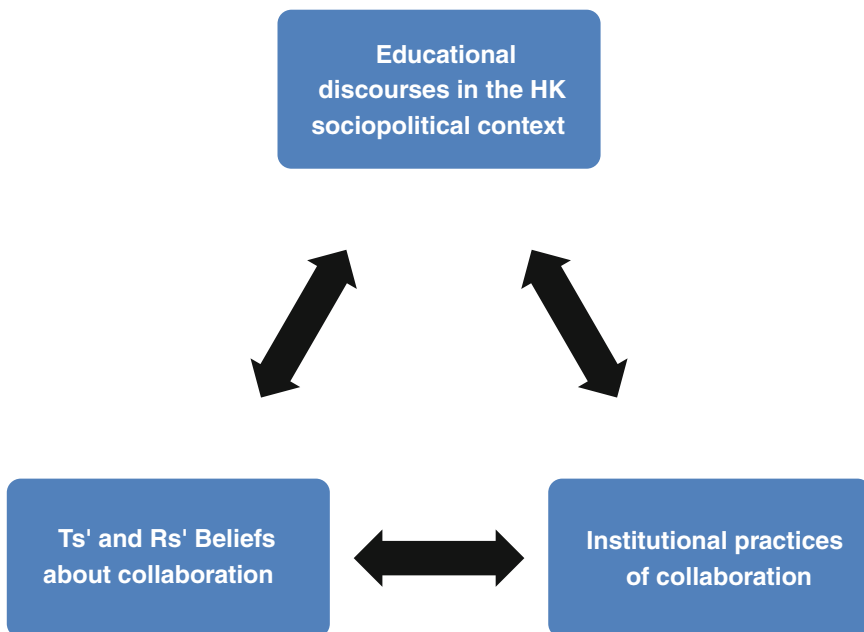


Fig. 4.1 The discursive construction of beliefs in CAR

These themes and tensions will be discussed further in the next chapter as I examine the interplay of power in the construction of identities and the interpersonal relations by the teachers and researchers in collaboration process. To conclude the discussion in this section, two questions have emerged concerning the construction of beliefs in the context of school–university collaboration:

- To what extent can CAR be ‘collaborative’ even if facilitators are positioned as ‘experts’?
- Can collaboration be achieved without equality in power?

Summary

In this chapter, I have examined how the teachers and researchers in this CAR case study negotiated collaboration as a team and how they responded or contested the tropes of collaboration circulating in the broader sociocultural context. The analysis of the data in this chapter is significant because CAR is still a relatively new practice in the context of Hong Kong and China, but the practice has gained more interests from educators in recent years. The analysis of the text using a CDA framework has been helpful in highlighting the tensions negotiating collaboration in the context of assessment reform in the Hong Kong sociocultural context. For example, there appeared to be a contrast between the facilitators’ and the teachers’ ideational constructions of collaboration. The texts produced by the facilitators appeared to conceal unequal power relations and the texts produced by the teachers appeared to strengthen and reproduce unequal power relations. This is a significant point as the teachers in the Hong Kong sociocultural context appeared to challenge the democratic ideology of collaboration which is foregrounded in the teacher education literature. So the analysis of the textual data in this chapter suggests that the school–university CAR project was shaped by the curriculum reform and partnership discourses that were circulating in the sociocultural context at the time of the case study. Since the launch of the final phase of educational reform in 2000, there had been a parallel initiative by the Hong Kong Government to promote partnership and collaboration projects between schools and tertiary institutions to ‘nurture’ what it claims to be a ‘new culture’ of lifelong learning in Hong Kong (Education Commission 2000). Collaboration in Hong Kong has been politicised by the government as a way to ‘resolve’ educational problems and school–university collaboration in Hong Kong policy documents have foregrounded two constructions: to provide professional school-based support to teachers and to ‘empower’ teachers to meet challenges from the new senior secondary curriculum reform (ACTEQ 2006). Collaboration is represented in policy documents as a way to ‘improve’ educational practices in schools. I conclude with two ongoing questions which I will continue to address in the final chapter of this book: to what

extent do teachers and facilitators in the CAR Project challenge social practices of collaboration? Why has collaboration achieved legitimacy in the context of teacher education in Hong Kong?

Looking ahead, in the Chap. 5 I examine the discursive construction of social relations in CAR, and in Chap. 6, I explore how social identities are constructed in the textual data of one teacher and one facilitator in this case study.

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Chapter 5

Negotiating Interpersonal Relations in School–University Collaboration

Introduction

This chapter focuses on examining the co-construction of interpersonal relations in school-university collaborative action research (CAR). A major theme in this chapter is to examine how collaboration ‘talk’ constitutes the enactment of interpersonal relations. More specifically, this chapter explores what discursive strategies were used to negotiate interpersonal and power relations in the textual data (emails and meeting transcripts) by the university facilitators (Anna and me) and the school teachers (Jennifer and Carol) while engaged in collaboration. In examining the construction of interpersonal relations between the facilitators and teachers, we can begin to understand the distribution and interplay of power within the collaborative relationship between institutions.

In collaborative action research literature, the collaborative practice enacted between the university researchers and the school teachers is construed to be ‘promising’ because it promotes teacher development. Some critical components of school-university collaborative action research identified in teacher education literature include facilitators and teachers sharing problems, identifying a research focus, planning the action research project, implementing the action research cycles and reflecting together to improve professional practice. These characteristics of collaborative action research are prominently featured in the literature as the key benefits of how university researchers can support teachers (or teachers supporting teachers) who want to carry out classroom-based action research projects to resolve educational problems (Burns 1999, 2009; Carr and Kemmis 1986; Elliott 1991; Oja and Smulyan 1989). However, there are fewer studies that fully problematise how interpersonal relationships between educators working together in the context of collaboration are negotiated, be it school teachers working as a team or university facilitators working with school teachers. As discussed in Chap. 3, the literature advocating school-university collaborative practices has a tendency to only

highlight the pragmatic problems as challenges for achieving collaboration, and some of the construed practical challenges include the issue of time and workload (Burns 1999; Elliott 1991; Li et al. 1999; Oja and Smulyan 1989; Tinker-Sachs 2002). However, what is missing in these studies, are theoretical discussions which confront the more complex problems to do with collaboration, such as the issue of power imbalance between the university researchers and the school teachers (see Chap. 3). So I hope the discussion of the data from the Hong Kong case study in this chapter will illuminate some of the complexities of negotiating and managing power relations in the context of collaborative action research as a way to understand the challenges of enacting collaboration beyond the practical problems including how facilitators and teachers negotiate ownership, support, partnership and equity. For example, how decisions were made and how power was distributed. So, the aim of this chapter is to highlight the complex interplay of power in the negotiation of collaboration as a social practice.

The data discussed in this chapter were drawn from the emails and transcripts of meetings between the researchers and the teachers during the co-planning phase, the two action research cycles and the co-planning for the Teacher Conference presentation which took place after the CAR project. As I have explained in Chap. 4, all interviews and meetings between the teachers and facilitators were conducted in English. Analysing emails as a form of computer-mediated communication can be useful in illuminating how power relations were managed in the context of collaborative action research.

Examining Interpersonal Relations in CAR

The analysis of the data in this chapter draws on the broader CDA theoretical framework discussed in Chap. 2. I also draw on Foucault's (1990, 1991) theorisation of power to examine how teachers and facilitators negotiated and contested their relations and roles in the case study.

To examine how interpersonal relations were negotiated, I used Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework to identify what he calls 'ways of acting' in the textual data (Fairclough 2003). Fairclough (2003) states that by analysing the 'ways of acting' in the text (informing, advising, promising, warning, judgement and so forth) is a way to understand how social relations are negotiated and managed. Fairclough (2003, p. 105) suggests that to examine the 'actional' meanings (ways of acting) in text we can analyse the types of exchange (knowledge exchange, activity exchange); speech functions (statements, questions, demands, offers); and grammatical mood (declaratives, interrogative, imperative). According to Fairclough (2003, p. 145) to analyse interpersonal relations, we can chart the choices in the representation of social actors (the teachers and facilitators) in the text using the following variables as a guideline:

Analytic terms	Meaning
Inclusion/Exclusion	Who is foregrounded, suppressed or backgrounded in the texts?
Pronoun/Noun	Is the social actor realised as a pronoun (<i>I, he, we, you, etc.</i>) or as a noun?
Grammatical role	Is the social actor realised as a participant in the clause or as a possessive noun or pronoun?
Activated/Passivated	Is the social actor the actor in processes (do things/make things happen), or the affected/beneficiary
Personal/Impersonal	Is the social actor represented personally or impersonally?
Named/Classified	Are names used? Is the social actor referred to as an individual or as a member of a group?
Specific/Generic	How the social actors are classified in the text? (those teachers/teachers as a generic group)

So in the context of this study, I examined what the discursive strategies were employed by the teachers and the facilitators to represent their actions, for example, I identified the ways in which requests were made; advice was given; and how teachers and facilitators managed agreements/disagreements in the emails and the face-to-face meetings.

In addition to Fairclough's (2003) analytical framework, I also borrowed Martin and Rose's (2003) discourse analysis theory to identify how attitudinal words were used in the text to illuminate how interpersonal relationships were represented in CAR case study. For example, I identified the positional and relational sources of attitudinal statements in text to analyse how power relations between the teachers and the facilitators were negotiated and managed. Martin and Rose (2003) argue that attitudinal statements in texts are always negotiated between the writer and the reader. A relational source refers to how the reader of the text is placed or aligned in relation to the writer/speaker, and the positional source refers to how the writer/speaker assesses her authority or position in the context of the CAR project. Hence, analysing attitudinal statements means analysing how appraisals were negotiated in terms of the relationship between the facilitators and the teachers and also who was making the appraisals, the facilitator or the institution? In addition, I also draw on Giddens's (1984) theory of structuration to position my argument within the structure/agency debate. Reflecting on Giddens's (1984) argument, the analysis framework also aimed to examine the on-going tension between structure and agency in the negotiation of appraisal and attitudinal statements in the conversations between the facilitators and teachers. Hence, to understand how interpersonal relations are negotiated in school-university collaboration, we have to examine the individual's relationship with others at the institutional level to identify the sources (personal, institutional or societal) of the attitude or appraisal. For example, we can analyse the following:

- grammatical mood in the text (interrogative, declarative and imperative statements) such as how the reader is placed in a particular speech role (a relational function);

- how the writer gives a command in the text as an indication of the writer’s assessment of her authority (a positioning function); and
- how adverbs are used to position degrees of judgement or value (a positioning function) (Martin and Rose 2003).

Martin and Rose (2003) propose that to analyse how attitudes are negotiated in texts, we can also examine the speaker’s choice of attitudinal vocabulary and phrases. So, analysing attitudinal words in texts means to identify the intensity of the “feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned” in the texts (Martin and Rose 2003 p. 22). Furthermore, CDA theorists argue that words have a positional value (the source of the speaker’s authority) if they are tied to a subjective evaluation of whoever makes the appraisal and thus it is a way to see the interpersonal metafunction of text at work (Fairclough 2003; Halliday and Hasan 1976; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004; Martin and Rose 2003). For example, when the facilitators (Anna and Me) evaluated the teachers’ (Jennifer and Carol) action plan in the emails, was the facilitator foregrounding her personal or institutional identity? Hence, attitudes may be the speaker’s own or may be attributed to other sources (the institution). In addition, Martin and Rose (2003) suggest that the attitudinal dimension of the text can be analysed in three categories: affective statements that show feelings; judgemental statements that show an opinion or view point; and appreciation statements that show admiration. In the analysis of the data, I observed that ‘giving praise’ was an action that was strongly featured in the text. Statements were analysed as being positive or negative and degrees of amplification (the intensity). For example, I examined what attitudinal words were used by the facilitators and teachers as they evaluated and gave comments to each other’s ideas in the action research planning process and in the co-planning for the Teacher Conference presentation. I also used the above analytical framework to examine how ownership, equity and partnership in collaborative practices are negotiated and contested; in particular I focused on examining how teachers requested support from the researchers and how support was constructed and presented in the emails and meeting transcripts. I also looked at how feedback and appraisals were presented by the teachers and facilitators. Martin and Rose’s (2003) suggest that analysing appraisals is a useful way to problematise interpersonal relations in a situated context because appraisals reflect more than just a person’s personal opinion, judgement or appreciation; rather they reflect institutional positioning within the context of wider society (Martin and Rose 2003).

How the University Facilitators Negotiated Social Relations in CAR Emails

At the initial phase of the CAR project, the facilitators (Anna and me) exchanged a series of emails with the teachers (Jennifer and Carol) to co-construct a plan for the action research project to be implemented at Green Hill Secondary School. In this

process, the teachers submitted a series of draft action research plans which they sent to the facilitators via email for comments. Extract 1 was Anna's response to the Jennifer's action research plan:

(Extract 1)

Hi there

Your plan looks great and I particularly like the idea of the 'feed in stage'. This is so important at this level. At the moment it looks like cycle 2 is the same as cycle 1 except that you are hoping to use the feedback from the students at the end of cycle 1 to make a change to cycle 2. I am wondering if you might consider making a very explicit change in cycle 2 and this could be to negotiate or discuss criteria for successful task input completion based in the input on your students receive in the feed-in stage in cycle 1 so making the criteria very explicit. What do you think? Does this seem too radical a change? I am wondering what your rationale is for including a question on what good feedback is in the 'feed in stage' in cycle 1 and whether this is something you want to follow up??

Hope this is helpful. Cheri will follow up with a phone call later on to see what you think.

Best wishes,

Anna

(email 1, sent by facilitators to teachers)

Extract 1 is the facilitators' co-constructed reply to the teacher's email. Jennifer and Carol had sent their action research plan to the Anna and me and had asked for our comments on their plan. So, this email was a collective response to give feedback to the teachers. The analysis of the email showed that the facilitators adopted a personal tone, for example they chose an informal form of address. They also began the message by giving praise to the teachers followed by some suggestions (how the facilitators think the teachers could amend/improve their plan), and these were presented tentatively in the form of questions rather than statements. The adoption of a friendly persona perhaps reflected the facilitators' beliefs that collaborative practices should not be hierarchical (see Chap. 4). The facilitators began by commenting on the strengths of the action research plan before they gave specific suggestions for improvements. Overall, the language used by the facilitators in the text was generally informal and highly tentative, for example:

I'm wondering if you might consider...

I'm wondering what...

What do you think?

Does this seem too radical a change?

The facilitators may have used these discursive strategies in the emails to downplay their expert identity when they communicated with the teachers, in particular, when they offered suggestions. For example, presenting changes in the form of questions, using double question marks in the text to 'double' emphasise the tentativeness of the suggestion and also the more friendly and informal salutation to address the teachers. Furthermore, the facilitators also frequently used the pronouns 'you' and 'your' to foreground the teachers' ownership of the action research plan and project ("your plan", "your rationale" and "your students"). It

could be argued that pronouns were used in the emails (Extracts 1 and 2) to include and exclude members of a group. For example, the facilitators may have used ‘you’ and ‘your’ to intentionally exclude the university research team as owners of the project. So, the discursive strategies used by the facilitators in Extract 1 foregrounded co-construction and shared ownership of ideas, but at the same time, the facilitators were resisting claiming joint ownership of the action research project. However, it could also be argued that by constructing the action research as ‘belonging’ to the teachers, it puts the onus of responsibility of doing the tasks on the teachers. Hence, to some extent, this representation contradicted the egalitarian beliefs about shared ownership of the project foregrounded by the facilitators in Chap. 4. This suggests that there were, at times, uncertainties and ambiguities in the relational positions constructed in the CAR project.

To illustrate this point further, it was noticed that in the facilitators’ emails, hedging devices were often used as a softening strategy to minimise imposition following a request and to downplay their institutional identity as ‘the experts’ in the CAR project:

(Extract 2)

Hi there Jennifer and Carol,

I’ve just had a quick look at your revised plan. It looks good. The change you have made is to allow students to view the video in the second cycle which is great. In view of this I am wondering if the following would be a more focused question to more closely and explicitly express what it is you are trying to find out:

[Anna states the revised research questions she has written here]

I’ve put this on your revised plan. Could you have a look and see if you think this is better or worse than the original!!

Cheri and I’ll get back to you about the questionnaire as soon as we can.

Best wishes,

Anna

(email 2, sent by facilitators to teachers)

In Extract 2, the facilitators had responded to the teachers’ requests for feedback for the revised plan. The facilitators recognised that their ‘suggestions’ might be regarded as a ‘must’ by the teachers and so constructed a problem-solving frame in the email in which they invited the teachers to discuss and consider the further suggestions that the facilitators had made in the action research plan. So, on the one hand, the emails showed that the facilitators offered lots of advice to the teachers even if the suggestions and feedback were constructed tentatively, but on the other hand, the facilitators resisted claiming the role of the expert. The facilitators frequently used hedging devices such as to downplay their ‘author-ity’ and institutional identity as university teacher educators. For example, in Extracts 1 and 2, the facilitators asked the teachers to decide if their suggestions are “*better or worse than the original*” (Extract 2). In linguistic research, it has been suggested that questions are used as hedging devices to express uncertainty, to soften a speech,

and to invite other participants to join in the discussion (Cameron 2001). In the CAR project emails written by the facilitators, questions were often used to assert power symmetry in the texts by inviting the teachers to contest their ‘expertise’. This suggested that the facilitators did not want to enact the role of the knowledge bearer so used mitigation devices to foreground equity and the co-construction of knowledge to emphasised shared decision-making process. Another example was the use of hedging devices to soften requests made in Extracts 1 and 2. The facilitators make use of questions as a strategy to foreground equity in seeking agreement from the teachers:

What do you think?

Does this seem too radical a change?

Could you have a look and see if you think this is better or worse than the original!!

The facilitators also used the modal ‘could’ in the text to express the possibility of an alternative action for the plan. They presented the alternative ideas to the teachers in a non-directive way by employing modals “*could*”, “*may*” or “*might*”, and using tentative language such as “*perhaps we could consider*”, “*make the changes only if you think it is better*” in Extracts 1 and 2. The facilitators used these discursive strategies to elicit agreement or disagreement from the teachers. The analysis showed that the facilitators were highly aware of their institutional status so they were treading carefully in the facilitation process so as not to ‘impose’ their ideas on the teachers. For example, the facilitators stated in the email that they had inserted the new research question onto the action research plan, but also made explicit in the text that the teachers can decide if they “think this is better or worse than the original!!”. This discursive strategy foregrounded the teachers’ power to contest any suggestions made by the facilitators. It seemed that the facilitators wanted to foreground the teachers as the key decision-makers in the action research project and to downplay their position as the university experts even though they gave lots of advice and suggestions to the teachers in the responses. So, it could be argued that the institutional identities were suppressed by the facilitators to foreground equity of power between the teachers and the facilitators.

Another prominent discursive strategy used by the facilitators to give feedback to the teachers was by employing attitudinal vocabulary. Attitudinal vocabulary can be positive and negative. In the facilitators’ feedback to the teachers, there was a high frequency of positive attitudinal words and phrases to represent the facilitators’ appreciation and approval of the teachers’ contributions. Examples of attitudinal phrases used by the facilitators in the feedback emails:

Your plan looks great and I particularly like the idea of the ‘feed in stage’. This is so important at this level.

I’ve just had a quick look at your revised plan. It looks good. The change you have made is to allow students to view the video in the second cycle which is great.

The attitudinal vocabulary was used as a discursive strategy in Extracts 1 and 2 to soften the suggested changes offered by the facilitators; they offered positive

feedback before they commented on what could be improved in the plan. Martin and Rose (2003) suggest that appraisal resources are used to establish the mood or tone of discourse. For example, when we make a judgement (positive or negative) about what someone has done, we are in fact assessing their capacity (Martin and Rose 2003). So, when the facilitators appraised the teachers in the emails they were in effect, evaluating the teachers' action research skills. In the emails written to the teachers, the facilitators downplayed their institutional identity, but at the same time, the exchanges between the facilitators and the teachers implied it was a social relationship between someone who knows and someone who does not (Fairclough 2003). So, in the context of Extracts 1 and 2, the facilitators co-constructed a tone of discourse to represent their particular about school–university collaboration as a democratic and mutual practice, but at the same time the emails showed how power hierarchies were embedded in school–university collaboration and these have to be continually managed and negotiated.

How Teachers Negotiated Social Relations in CAR Emails

In this section, I examine how the teachers construed the facilitators in their replies to the facilitators' email during in the co-planning stage of the CAR project. In Extract 3, the teachers begin by thanking the facilitators for their suggestions and stated explicitly that amendments will be made and a new plan will be sent after the New Year holiday:

(Extract 3)

Dear Anna,

Thank you very much for your suggestions. They'll be useful for us to make changes. We will discuss about the plan and make the amendment soon, hope to send you the plan right after the New Year Holiday for your reference.

Thanks again for your kind help!

Regards,

Jennifer Lee

(Email 3 sent by teachers to facilitating team)

The email illustrated on-going negotiation of power relations between the teachers and the facilitators collaborating in the CAR project. The tone, mood and language used in the teacher's email seemed more formal than the facilitators' messages (Extracts 1 and 2). For example, Jennifer signed off using her full name (Jennifer Lee) and a more formal closing (Regards). In the first sentence and the last sentence of the email, she showed appreciation of the facilitators' feedback by thanking them for their suggestions and feedback. In the teacher's email, it seemed that the facilitators were construed as 'experts', thus foregrounding both the teachers' and the facilitators' institutional identities. There was a high level of

commitment in the teachers' response to indicate to the facilitators that the suggestions given would be implemented and the plan would be "amended". The statement "hope to send you the plan right after the New Year Holiday for your reference" construed the facilitators as the ones who could legitimately expect to receive and to evaluate the action research plans even though the facilitators in their emails had foregrounded the teachers as the owners of action research project. In Extract 4, the teachers requested further evaluation and comments on their revised action research plan which they sent after the New Year:

(Extract 4)

Dear Anna,

Here is the amended version of the research plan. Changes have been made in the first cycle. Please see if there is anything we need to improve.

Also I would like to ask about the sample questionnaire and the feedback sheets, will they be written in simple English as our students are only at form 2 level. I think it may be more suitable for them to fill in the questionnaires by multiple choices or in simple English.

Thanks a lot!

Regards,

Jennifer Lee

(Email 4, sent by teachers to facilitating team)

In Extract 4, again, the teachers chose to use the more formal and polite tone in their email to the facilitators. They requested the facilitators to review the further changes made, thus directly seeking the facilitators' approval of the amended action research plan. The second sentence "Please see if there is anything we need to improve" again presented the facilitators as the experts by the teachers. The teachers asked the facilitators to provide more feedback and suggestions, thus indicating that they did not construe themselves as 'experts' in making decisions about the action research project. So, the teachers' emails seemed to indicate that the teachers were foregrounding the differences in perceived status between themselves and university researchers and were taking care not to overstep personal and institutional boundaries. So, the analysis of the teachers' emails indicated that they *contested* the democratic social relations constructed by the facilitators in the CAR project. The data also suggested that the teacher maintained social distance by positioning themselves as novice action researchers in the emails to the facilitators.

Overall, the emails analysed in this section showed that both the teachers and the facilitators were mutually uncertain about their roles and relationship in the CAR project. The frequent use of questions and polite requests in the email exchanges illustrated how power relations were a process of on-going negotiations between the collaborators. Although the facilitators made an attempt to negotiate a democratic practice of collaboration, this practice was contested by the teachers. The analysis highlighted that the power relations enacted in this case study were shaped both by collaboration discourse and individual actions, reflecting Giddens' (1984) point about the mutuality of structure/agency.

Teachers and Facilitators Negotiating Social Relations for the Action Research Conference

At the end of the Hong Kong CAR project, a one-day conference was organised for all the participating teachers from the different schools to share their action research project findings. In action research literature, this dissemination stage (when teachers take their research to the public domain) is considered important for transformation of classroom practice (Burns 1999; Edge 2001; Elliott 1991; Whitehead and McNiff 2006). The data in this section were drawn from the meeting transcripts when the facilitators (Anna and me) and the teachers (Jennifer and Carol) were co-planning for the one-day teacher conference. This section examines how the teachers and facilitators negotiated social relations and roles when they were preparing for the presentation.

Extract 5 shows the facilitators initiating the discussion in the meeting with the teachers at the school:

(Extract 5)

Cheri: We're at Green Hill Secondary School with Carol and Jennifer to discuss the preparation for the conference, presentation of the research. I think it's really exciting that you've come forward to say you want to do this. You're the first school. That's great.

Anna: This [conference] abstract looks fine. I think it's short. It shows a little bit of your methodology and it shows what you're trying to find out and it gives a brief idea of your findings, so I think that's fine, the abstract.

(Teacher and Facilitator Meeting)

In Extract 5, the facilitators enacted the role of the experts by providing feedback on the teachers' performance in the action research project. The facilitators used affective statements and attitudinal words in the text to appraise the teachers: exciting, fine, great, happy. The evaluative statements in the extract foregrounded the facilitators' institutional identity and authority to legitimise how the presentation abstract should be written. The start of the meeting reflected more of an interview discourse rather than a two-way discussion with the teachers, and it seemed quite formal. Furthermore, the facilitators appraised the teachers' contribution to the conference and their draft research abstract so they were foregrounding the teachers' ownership of the action research project. It seemed that the facilitators were the ones who were leading the meeting. This was further illustrated in the following extract:

(Extract 6)

Cheri: In terms of the preparation for the conference I think between now and November you'll probably need about 3 meetings to discuss your roles. In each of those meetings you can discuss what is it that you need to share with the audience. The presentation will be about 20 min. So, in terms of, you know ... I've done presentation before and 20 min sounds like a lot of the time but it's not. It goes just like that, so I think you really need to be selective about what you want to present to the audience and I think you can do a PowerPoint right?

Jennifer: We've got the video and some photos.

Cheri: That's right. Things like that take time. You got to decide, wow, there's quite a lot there. If we show 10 min video clips, that's half the presentation time gone! So, you need to sit down together and discuss who will do what first of all.

Carol: Just two of us or ...?

Jennifer: ... We do it together?

Cheri: Yes, that's if... you decide if you want to co-present.

Anna: I'm happy to come in if you want but I mean I think it's ... I am happy to be a presenter but I mean I think it's probably better coming from you because you've done the project, so I don't want to steal your thunder ... anyway, so I'm happy to help you. You can certainly send us what you want to present and then we can have a look at it.

Cheri: That's right.

Anna: And we can tailor it, and then you present it but if you really want me to come in, then yes sure I'm happy to.

Carol: Yeah, for this one if there is any mistake, you can ...

Anna: Yes, sure. That sort of thing I'm happy to do and you can send me your PowerPoint. You can send me the video clips you are going to use

(Teacher and Facilitator Meeting)

Extract 6 indicated that the power relations between the teachers and facilitators remained hierarchical throughout the CAR project—the facilitators were predominantly the speakers who gave advice and suggestions to the teachers in the text. The turns were dominated by the two facilitators giving numerous suggestions to the teachers on how they could present their research at the conference. In Extract 6, there was only one interruption by the teachers, but no examples of disagreement. Both Anna and I were leading the discussion, but it was Anna who assumed the role of the group leader in that she led the discussion topic. So, the Extract 6 predominantly reflected the specialist/learner and consultant/client discourses, for example the facilitators offering advice and suggestions to the teachers on how to organise the presentation at the conference (DeFina et al. 2006). The facilitators did try to downplay their institutional identity to some extent by using a problem-solving frame to give suggestions. For instance, the facilitators did not want to co-present with the teachers unless it was 'what they wanted', instead they negotiated their roles as resource and information providers in the text. It was also interesting that in Extract 6 Carol was surprised that only the teachers would be presenting at the conference. Carol's response perhaps suggested that the teachers and facilitators had different ideas of ownership of the project. The facilitators did not want to co-present because they felt the action research project 'belonged' to Jennifer and Carol, but the teachers seemed surprised that they were going to present without the facilitators. Anna's comments ("*I'm happy to come in if you want but I mean I think it's ... probably better coming from you*") suggested that there was tension in the negotiation of power relations between the teachers and the

facilitators in the CAR project and the perceived ownership of the action research project was different between the facilitators and teachers. In the extract, the facilitators resisted from claiming shared ownership by responding: “because you’ve done the project, so I don’t want to steal your thunder”. Anna’s response suggested that the facilitators contested their role as shared owners and partners with the teachers. But at the same time, the facilitators also assumed position of ‘experts’ and ‘knowledge providers’ in the way they offered suggestions and in how they continuously gave feedback on the teachers’ performance in the action research project. Hence, the negotiation of social and power relations between teachers and facilitators in school-university collaboration were highly complex. The texts suggested that agreements and disagreements were carefully negotiated in the text by the teachers and facilitators.

Negotiating Intra-University Collaborative Relations

The aim of this section is to show how linguistic features of email texts connected with what was going on socially between the two key facilitators (Anna and I) in the CAR project (Fairclough 2001). The aim is to problematise intra-institutional collaboration between colleagues in collaborative action research. The data were drawn from the emails which the two university facilitators (Anna and I) exchanged during the collaborative action research project. As mentioned in the previous section, the emails sent to the teachers in the CAR project were co-constructed between Anna and I, so the analysis focused on examining how we constructed the feedback and support for the teachers, Jennifer and Carol, in the CAR project. In particular, the analysis examined how the tropes of shared power and equity were enacted, negotiated or contested between the facilitators in the emails (see Chap. 3 for a discussion of the tropes). For example, how facilitators used politeness strategies in seeking consent and making requests in constructing and negotiating the facilitation practice. I also examined which particular discursive strategies were adopted by the facilitators to maintain ‘good’ collegial relations and managed power relations while working together. For example, I examined how the facilitators made requests and gave advice to each other; how advice and agreement/disagreement were managed in the emails. In the context of the case study, Anna was positioned as the lead-facilitator and I was acting as a co-facilitator so my main role was to support Anna during the action research process. Although a democratic power relationship was foregrounded in the practice (see Chap. 4), deeper analysis of the texts from a social relations perspective revealed subtle levels of asymmetry in the decision-making process between the two facilitators.

In Extract 7, we can see how Anna was negotiating power relations as the group leader by inviting Katy and I to jointly make decisions with her concerning the feedback for the teachers.

(Extract 7)

To: Cheri, Katy

From: Anna

Dear Cheri and Katy,

My response is attached. I feel they need a bit of help to untangle all the ideas they have. Cheri, could you have a look at my response and see what you think. Is it too much and far too sophisticated for junior forms? Is it too imposing? I don't want to force anyone to do anything they are not interested in exploring. Please feel free to change it in whatever way you think and then - if you don't mind, as you suggested, would you follow up with a phone call?

...Anyway - could you have a look? This has taken me all day... I'd be grateful for your comments.

Anna

(E-mail sent by Anna to Cheri and Katy)

The email evoked symmetry and equity in the decision-making process between the research team members. For example, in Extract 7, we see an example of Anna as the lead facilitator negotiating and contesting her role as the group leader of the action research subgroup. Anna foregrounded high equity in role relations between the team members in the way she always invited input from colleagues. Anna also sought feedback from the co-facilitators and the Katy, the project manager. Even though Katy was not positioned as a co-facilitator, Anna still included Katy in the email chains and addressed Katy in the emails. So, this was one example of how power relations were managed between the co-researchers in the collaborative action research case study and shows how collaboration is a site for on-going power negotiations.

Another prominent discursive strategies used to evoke equity and partnership in the decision-making process between the co-facilitators were the frequent use of questions. For example, the facilitators used questions to initiate discussions on how to support the teachers and what changes to make in the action research plan. It might be argued that the facilitators used these questions as a strategy to seek agreement (versus compliance) from the colleagues in a non-directive way. The use of questions as a mitigation device positions the facilitators' relationship as democratic and equal. Anna was aware that she was the group leader and in her emails to the co-facilitator and the research team project manager, she managed the power relations by often downplaying her role as the group leader and thus, her institutional identity.

In all the emails exchanged between Anna and I, we included Katy in the loop, but what was interesting was that Katy did not participate in this email chain at all. The conversation was in effect, between the two co-facilitators, Anna and I. By choosing not to join in the chain of discussion between the two co-facilitators, Katy was perhaps acknowledging the two facilitators as the key decision-makers and leaders of the collaborative action research project with Green Hill Secondary School. Katy's emails to the facilitators usually related to the running of the project, thus reinforcing her role as the administrator in the team. In this way, Katy contested the trope of equity constructed by Anna and me in the emails.

Also prominent in the text written by Anna to the teachers was her hesitation in giving direct advice to the teachers. So in the email exchanges between the facilitators, Anna often asked for input, thus contesting her managing power relations by foregrounding the trope of equity in the communication process between the members of the research team. But at the same time, the email foregrounded hierarchy in the way Anna addressed the actual request directly to me (not Katy) in line 3 when she asked me specifically for my thoughts on the reply written for the teachers. So, Anna was also aware of Katy's role as the project manager and perhaps did not want to impose on Katy the additional duty of commenting on facilitators' email responses to teachers, which might have been interpreted as additional workload for Katy. Or another reason could have been because Anna wanted to keep Katy informed on what was going on in the project, which suggests that the facilitators wanted to be accountable for the decisions they made concerning the input given to the teachers. In this way, it could be argued that the facilitators positioned Katy, the manager of the project, as a supervisor who was monitoring what was going on. So, the text showed hidden tensions in terms of how power relations were organised in the context of the project set up, these roles were sometimes opaque. This is further illustrated in the email that I wrote to Anna and Katy in Extract 8:

(Extract 8)

To: Anna

From: Cheri

Dear Katy & Anna,

I've taken a look at the lesson plan. I actually worked quite closely with this group of teacher in Forum 3, both were in my group. They did not bring a plan to the forum because they were so busy, so this is very encouraging and it shows how useful Anna's workshop/input was in pushing the teachers along!

The plan looks quite interesting and if I am correct, they would like to see if students are able to perform better after feedback (self, peer & teacher). Perhaps we can encourage them to modify the research question slightly so it is clear it is about feedback, and not self/peer assessment. Cycle one looks like pilot for cycle 2. Their question on how to make the teacher criteria accessible to students, well they could design a feedback checklist using student-friendly language so they can just tick the criteria. This group of teachers were concerned (in Forum 3) whether weak students can give feedback on language/accuracy. So they need to think about what they want students to give feedback on/and what students can actually do. What the students can't give feedback on, I guess the teacher could do it (so the research question could be about the usefulness of collaborative feedback?). Perhaps it might be easier to call and speak to them directly. As I worked closely with them in Forum 3, I am happy to do this on Monday and go through the plan with them on the phone and share our ideas with them? It'll give them a chance to ask questions too.

The plan also looks like a case study (1 group of students). I've highlighted some of the points I am not sure about. Perhaps Anna could take a look and see what you think? The MP3 idea is nice, but they want to know if we need this data? Or do we just need the video of the one group (case study)? Perhaps we can help them de-complicate cycle 2?! Step 4 in cycle 2 is where the teacher gives feedback, can they use the same feedback criteria

checklist as the students? So students get both teacher and student feedback in cycle 2? Just some thoughts, what do you think Anna?

Cheers,

Cheri

(Email from Cheri to Anna and Katy)

In Extract 8, the message was addressed to both Anna and Katy, although the text showed that the questions in the email were directed at Anna (as the group leader) rather than Katy. For example, I asked Anna to take a look at the teacher's action research plan. The tentativizer 'perhaps' is used in the sentence (*Perhaps Anna could take a look and see what you think?*) to downplay any imposition on the group leader (Anna). However, the email also foregrounded authority. For example, there were lots of comments and opinions about the teachers' action research plan. The co-facilitator also evaluated the teachers' plan in a way which foregrounded power *symmetry* between the co-facilitators, but power *asymmetry* between the teachers and the facilitators.

Furthermore, the analysis suggests that hedging devices were used by facilitators in the email exchanges to minimise imposing on colleagues as a way of maintaining good collegiality. In the above emails, both facilitators recognised that their suggestions might be regarded as an imposition by the reader. Requests were often framed as questions to downplay the power differences and to maintain equity and politeness strategies such as tentativizers and questions were used in the emails to mitigate face threatening acts between the co-facilitators in the CAR project. The emails showed the facilitators in the CAR case study predominantly adhered to politeness maxim of intra-university collaboration in teacher education literature by foregrounding the collaborative decision-making process as a shared practice and co-construction of knowledge. Moreover, the analysis strongly suggests that there was some tension in intra-university collaboration, but explicit exercise of power was avoided and power relations were managed through polite requests and tentative suggestions in the emails. So, the analysis shows competing discourses were in operation in the email texts written by the facilitators in the CAR project. To summarise, the data discussed in this section suggest that co-facilitating in the context of collaborative action research was a highly complex process. Negotiating shared power was not easy, even when the collaborative practice appeared to be mutual and democratic because there may be other forms of power in operation such as institutional and individual power (Fairclough 2003; Foucault 1978; Popkewitz and Brennan 1998).

Discussion

In the analysis of the textual data from the CAR project in this chapter, the findings suggest that the discursive construction of interpersonal relations in both school-university and intra-university collaboration were highly complex in the Hong Kong sociocultural context. The analysis indicates that the facilitators in this case study managed power relations by downplaying their institutional roles to

foreground democracy and group solidarity in the context of the case study. At the same time, there were contradictions and tensions in the texts, for example the teachers contested the democratic set up constructed by facilitators, but decisions were made predominantly by the facilitators in the case study. The facilitators’ use of appraisal in the text also contested the democratic discourse and in the analysis the teachers’ emails, they often presented themselves as ‘novice researchers’. The teachers rarely challenged the suggestions given by the facilitators and they did not appraise the facilitators or give feedback to the decisions (Martin and Rose 2003). So, the positioning of the facilitators as experts in the text legitimised their authority to evaluate the action research plan including the teachers’ ideas for the action research.

In terms of social relations, the analysis suggests that the decision-making process was in a sense highly hierarchal. For example the flow of communication with the teachers was essentially one-way with little mediation and negotiations made (Fairclough 2003). So, critical analysis of the texts indicated that the interpersonal relations were, in practice, inequitable and reflective of the hierarchical institutional and social practices in the broader Hong Kong context (Fairclough 2003). Both facilitators and teachers engaged in contestation and struggle over how to ‘do’ power in the collaborative practice enacted in this Hong Kong case study. We also saw how discursive strategies were employed to minimise impositions, illustrating how power relations are always present in collaboration discourse and need to be always managed even within the parameters of politeness. Figure 5.1 highlights how relations of power are negotiated in this case study.

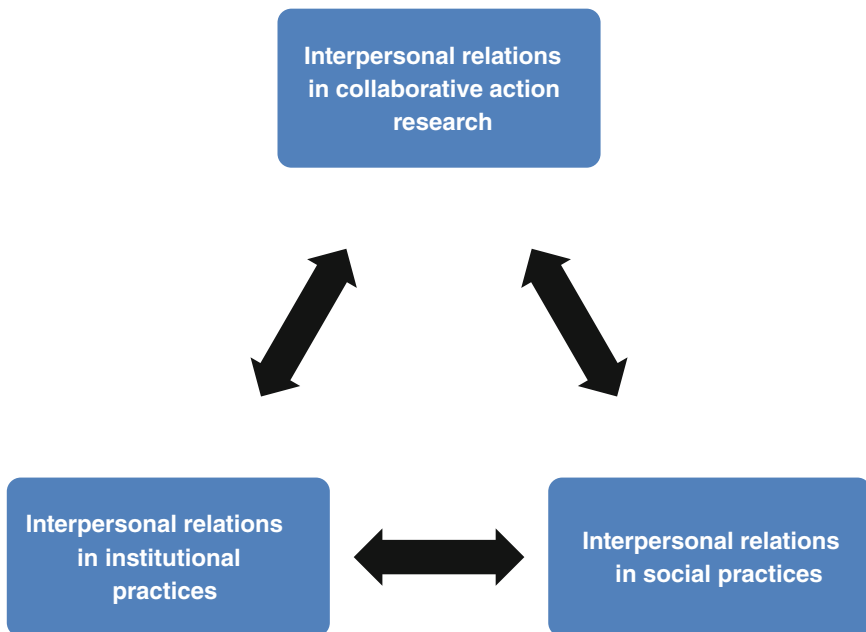


Fig. 5.1 Negotiating power relations in CAR

Summary

To conclude, this chapter has shown that facilitators in the CAR project employed both formal and informal discursive strategies in the emails written to the teachers to manage power relations. Although the facilitators did not adopt an authoritative position *per se* in their communication with the teachers, authority of the facilitators was implicit as they were the writers who predominantly gave praise and evaluative comments to the teachers. Furthermore, the facilitators' comments and suggestions, however, tentative they were presented in the emails, were never challenged by the teachers. The facilitators also used competing discourses in the emails, for example sometimes speaking as friendly co-workers and at other times, speaking as experts. To take an example, the on-going mix of the formal and informal discourses in the facilitators' emails was used to manage and negotiate the complex power relations in the collaborative action research case study. However, this mix of discourse also highlighted the tensions in constructing collaborative relationships in the Hong Kong sociocultural context in which teachers and university researchers have different social status and access to resources. The analysis of texts in this chapter suggests that the interpersonal relations between the facilitators and teachers remained opaque and unclear. Furthermore, the analysis of the personal pronouns in the emails point to an ambiguity in the positional relations between the facilitator and the teachers in this CAR project case study. The predominant use of the pronouns 'you' and 'I' in the texts suggests that the collaborative relationship was mediated by the institutional identities of the teachers and facilitators. The facilitators were construed as the experts providing support and advice to the teachers, which in turn reinforced the perceived societal social status differentials between school teachers and university researchers (Johnston 2009; Stewart 2006). This power hierarchy is most apparent in the emails written by the teachers to the facilitators and negotiating shared ownership and equity in school-university collaboration may be more superficial than they appear in CAR literature. So, ideals such as collective dynamic and joint ownership are, in reality, difficult to achieve in school-university collaboration. Furthermore, the interpersonal relations constructed by the teachers and the facilitators in this case study indicate that asymmetry of power was perhaps co-constructed 'pragmatically' to enable the facilitators to provide the necessary support for the teachers, who had not conducted action research in the past. The findings suggest that the practice of collaboration constructed in the Hong Kong sociocultural context is different to how it is framed in teacher education literature. For example, it seems that there was a complex interdiscursive mix in the texts; facilitators were construed as experts and co-learners at the same time and there were tensions and contradictions in the construction of interpersonal relations in the case study. It seems that school-university collaboration does not always assume the form of democratic partnership as foregrounded in teacher education literature and beneath the veneer of

‘politeness’ there exists a much more complex web of asymmetrical power relations between teachers and researchers working together in collaborative action research. The implications of the findings in this chapter will be discussed further in the final chapter of this book.

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Chapter 6

Negotiating Identities in School–University Collaboration

Introduction

This chapter examines how the teachers and facilitators negotiated and managed their subject positions within the texts of the school–university collaboration in the Hong Kong CAR case study. In Chap. 3, it has been highlighted that collaborative action research literature (e.g. Burns 1999; Carr and Kemmis 1986; Elliott 1991; Kincheloe 2003; Oja and Smulyan 1989; Stenhouse 1975; Whitehead and McNiff 2006) typically presents collaboration as an awareness raising activity for education professionals and positions teachers as critical practitioners working with expert university researchers to develop a critical understanding of their own professional practice, a perspective that echoes Schön’s (1983, 1987) construction of teachers as reflective practitioners. Furthermore, the research based on this sort of school–university collaboration is more ‘empowering’ and ‘equitable’, since teachers are positioned as co-researchers rather than as passive consumers of research. The role of the university researcher is thus to support teachers in translating research into practice and interrogating practice through research, while the role of the school teacher is to improve practice through reflection and research and to ensure that such research is ‘grounded’ in teachers’ and students’ experiences in schools and classrooms. Such perspectives are characteristic of research driven by an emancipatory, consciousness-raising and praxis-oriented ethic, and guided by master signifiers like enlightenment, empowerment, participation, collaboration, consensus and democracy (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005, pp. 36–44). However, within such perspectives there is insufficient attention to how existing identities and power relations always mediate and constitute praxis and hence how collaboration is always going to be shaped by the historical and contemporary power and status inequalities that exist between university facilitators and teachers. So, on the one hand, the CAR literature argues that collaborative action research is ‘good’ for educators because it transforms teachers into reflective practitioners; yet, on the other hand, the complexities of *how* teachers negotiate their identities as reflective

practitioners and *how* facilitators negotiate their identities as critical friends in the power-laden institutional contexts of CAR practices are not explicitly addressed.

In order to address these complexities, Chan and Clarke draw on notions of differentially defined, discursively shaped and socially situated identities. From this theoretical perspective, identities are seen as differential, in that they are reliant on a system of differences (Connolly 2002; Laclau 2000); as discursively shaped, in that they are constantly created and negotiated through a wide range of competing discursive formations; and as socially situated in that they require the capacity to be recognised as a certain ‘kind of person’ in a given sociopolitical context (Clarke 2008, 2009; Gee 2005, 2012). Moreover, our understanding of identities assumes that we have multiple identities, reflecting the ways we live in multiple and changing spatio-temporal contexts, and that any one of such multiple identities may be in tension or in alignment with others. For example, the university researcher identity may be in tension or in alignment with the action researcher facilitator identity. The analysis focused on exploring the linguistic manifestations of identity in the textual data to track the speakers’ discursive ways of being. The following questions were used to guide the coding and analysis of the data in this chapter:

- What is the facilitator’s/teacher’s sense of the self as a collaborator in collaborative action research?
- How do the facilitator and the teacher recognise the self and others in the CAR project?
- What kinds of identities are made explicit in the texts?
- How do the facilitator and the teacher negotiate their subjectivity in the discourse?

The approach assumes that texts, whether in spoken or written mode, have a significant role in constructing people’s identity because who we are is partly a matter of what we speak and what we write (Fairclough 2003; Luke 1996). Fairclough argues that our identities have two analytically distinct aspects, namely social identity and personality (personal identity); where *social identity*, which is constructed through the process of socialisation, refers to the social roles we enact in a particular context, while *personal identity* refers to our pre-linguistic, embodied sense of ourselves as individuals, which provides the basis for agentic interventions in social identity (Fairclough 2003, pp. 160–161). There are parallels here with Bakhtinian notions of authoritative (social identity) versus internally persuasive (personal identity) discourses (Bakhtin 1981) or indeed with the Lacanian distinction between the *symbolic*, which ‘interpellates us into the normative regulations of the social order’, the *imaginary*, which ‘founds our perceptions of ourselves as individuals who possess unique personalities and the potential for exceptional existential trajectories’, and the *real*, which ‘intrudes into our lives as an unruly vortex of bodily jouissance’ (Ruti 2012, p. 1). In each of these theorisations, the meaning of human being—identity—is a complex and ongoing process of becoming, shaped through dialectical interaction between disparate elements—social and individual, linguistic and material, conscious and unconscious—that comprise the self.

In the analysis of the textual data, we looked for manifestations of this dialectic process within identification in textual features such as modality and evaluation. Modality is concerned with examining the degree to which people commit themselves to (or believe in) the truth of what they say or write, as well as the degree of obligation or necessity involved in their spoken or written utterances (Fairclough 2003, pp. 165–167). In the context of the CAR case study, this includes examining what speakers commit themselves to when they make statements about the collaboration process and practice, as well as how questions are framed and how demands or offers are made in the email exchanges and the meeting transcripts. It also involves analysing the degree of tentativeness, confidence or assertiveness in the statements of the teachers and facilitators. Evaluation, by contrast, is concerned with examining the values which people commit themselves to in texts. Evaluations are manifested in linguistic choices such as the metaphors and vocabulary used in questions/statements (knowledge exchange), as well as the way demands and offers (activity exchange) are made in the text (Fairclough 2003, p. 167). We also looked for metaphors used by the teachers and facilitators to represent the self and others in the collaborative action research project, for example, ‘mother’ and ‘child’.

Negotiating the Teacher–Researcher’s Identities in CAR

In this section, we examine the discursive construction of the teacher–researcher identities in collaborative action research, focusing on the construction of the intrapersonal identity of a teacher, Carol, who participated in the CAR project and worked closely with Anna. The analysis draws on data from interviews with Carol in which she discusses her perceptions of the action research experience in the CAR project.

In Extract 1, Carol reflects on the action research project experience and why her school participated in CAR projects with tertiary institutions:

(Extract 1)

Interviewer: What attracted you to the project?

Carol: Because it was somewhat similar to the work we do with the students at the school. So I think it was useful and at that time I think I had three projects so two with the university and one with HKIEd [Hong Kong Institute of Education] so not just this university. Well, we have another project but we just finished after three years...It’s somewhat related as I am the SBA [school-based assessment] coordinator so I think the feedback (from the university researchers) is useful...because I think we can adapt it to our school curriculum.

(Carol, Teacher from Green Hill Secondary School)

In this excerpt, Carol foregrounds her institutional identity as the school’s school-based assessment coordinator, with participation in research deemed useful to the extent that it complements this role and assists in tasks like developing curriculum and working with students. Her evaluation of this usefulness is moderate

and measured rather than enthusiastic or effusive, with the hedging strategy (‘I think’) serving to distance Carol’s identity from the CAR project and place it firmly in the school. This reading is reinforced by the analysis of Extract 2, where Carol’s identification as a participant in the action research project derives its value from the access it affords to professional development that will support her primary identity as a teacher:

(Extract 2)

Interviewer: Did you feel it was a good professional development experience?

Carol: Yes, it was a great experience. Because we seldom have the chance to stand before... teachers of different schools and other countries...so it was a great experience...We can share ideas and then we can get some ideas from teachers of other schools...We learnt a lot from other professional bodies and I think that we can use what we’ve learnt on our students...Maybe professional development for ourselves...I enjoyed the conference because it was a new experience for me standing in front of adults because I am just used to standing in front of students the younger ones, but not adults! And then all the experts, so it was for me a new experience. And for the students we now know how to give feedback to them and how to make them understand how to give peer feedback.

(Carol, Teacher from Green Hill Secondary School)

Here Carol’s evaluation of the usefulness of her participation in the project highlights the opportunities to meet, interact and exchange ideas with other teachers. The interactions with the academics, by contrast, seem to be something of an afterthought, or an added bonus (‘And then all the experts’). She returns at the end of the extract to the payoff for her students back at school, thus reaffirming her primary identification as a teacher. Interestingly, her emphasis on providing feedback to students echoes the overwhelming priority of Hong Kong teachers in relation to their mentoring work with pre-service student teachers. The priority given to feedback is also evident in Extract 3 in which Carol evaluates her action research project and discusses the problems she and her colleagues faced doing the project, during one of the sharing forums for teachers in the project:

(Extract 3)

Maybe I can talk about the problems that we face in doing this research. Because students have expectations about (teacher) feedback that means we want them to think about what they can get from feedback or why feedback was so important to them, but the problem is that maybe because all (the feedback) these are given in English. Sometimes I think the students may not really understand all these items. I think maybe if we can give them some Chinese translation then it’s much better and they really understand what feedback is and then they can prioritise them. Then they can think which one is important because the purpose of this research, or one of the purposes, is that we want students to get benefit from feedback, how they can do better group interaction in the next cycle, so I think that’s the first problem all right. They may not really understand these items in English...We are expecting maybe too much from the students.

(Carol, Teacher from Green Hill Secondary School)

In the above extract, Carol again foregrounds her institutional identities as a school-based assessment coordinator and as an English language teacher as she shares issues around the provision of feedback in classroom-based assessment

practices. Carol begins her contribution tentatively (‘Maybe I can talk about...’). She then legitimates the ‘problem’ that she introduces on the grounds of the ‘expectations’ of her students and the need for feedback to be intelligible to them. This empirical reality provides an implicit counterweight to the official line [evident in the English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide (CDC 2007)] that privileges communicating with students in English. In a sense, she is using her experience in the officially sanctioned and high status action research project as a warrant for providing feedback in Chinese, something that is common practice in schools in Hong Kong but that is officially seen as transgressive. That is, she is using the legitimation offered by participation in research culture to speak back to the current ‘research-informed’ hegemony in the field.

So far, we have seen Carol foregrounding her institutional identities as the SBA coordinator and English language teacher, with her ultimate justification and goal being to help students improve. Perhaps as a consequence, Carol also frequently emphasised the challenges of doing research as a teacher, while rationalising her participation in the collaborative action research as a professional development activity for teachers in schools that may bring potential benefits for students in the classroom.

Negotiating the Facilitator’s Identities in the CAR Project

In this section, we examine five extracts of interviews with Anna to analyse how she negotiated her intrapersonal identities as a CAR facilitator in the case study. In Extract 4, Anna begins by describing her roles as a facilitator in the CAR project, and the specific support she gave to teachers in both the face-to-face meetings and online (emails):

(Extract 4)

Interviewer: What types of support have you provided for the teachers since the launch of the project?

Anna: I gave the teachers lots of information on feedback, examples of research plans, surveys and all sorts of materials. We did a few tasks (in the workshops), even with data analysis, even though they might not have to go into that. Before the interview, there were several emails going back and forwards. They sent their research plans and I made comments, quite tentative about it because you know *I am not used to doing this sort of thing*. I don’t want to force people to do things they don’t want to do! I would send them the email and you would follow up with a phone call. I think those phone calls, that personal input has really helped make all of the groups really gelled with us, the relationship between the University and the school and the research team in each school, I think the phone calls really made a difference...*It’s not a question of you and us, but a question of we are co-investigating this together!*

(Interview with Anna, CAR project facilitator)

As part of a team of university researchers, Anna was positioned as an authoritative expert. Yet in this excerpt, Anna begins by emphasising the different

types of support she had provided to the teachers. She thus foregrounds a professional identity as a caring teacher educator (Murray 2006), as someone who provides support to teachers and is responsible for ensuring that the teachers, as first time action researchers, had adequate input to do the action research project. She also foregrounds her lack of experience in both doing and facilitating action research, thus downplaying the identity of a research expert (“*I’m not used to doing this sort of thing*”). As a non-expert, Anna emphasises the importance of making the teachers feel that they have ownership of the project, thus asserting the identity of a democratic facilitator. From the perspective of this identity, she underlines the importance of adopting a personal and collegial approach when communicating with the teachers and the school so that everyone feels she/he is part of the team (“*It’s not a question of you and us, but a question of we are co-investigating this together!*”). In drawing on the identity resources of a caring teacher educator and a democratic facilitator to mitigate the authoritative identity of an expert researcher, Anna exemplifies how social identity construction is a process of negotiation, one replete with tensions between differing components of identity.

Anna continues to assert her professional identity as a caring teacher educator in the following extract, employing a specifically gendered metaphor:

(Extract 5)

It’s a bit like a mother with a child. If you play with the child to begin with, then that child can go off and play on their own and be quite happy. But if you refuse to play with that child, that child will want your attention and need your attention more and more. So it’s much better to work with them [teachers] at the beginning, to give them the confidence, so that they can go off and as they’re doing now and be independent.

(Interview with Anna, CAR project facilitator)

Carver and Pikalo (2008) argue that metaphors inform and structure our thinking in discourse, functioning as discursive hubs in the interplay of texts and contexts. In comparing her relationship with the teachers in the collaborative action research project to that of a mother and child, Anna seems to advocate social constructivist theories of learning. For just as the child’s capacity for independent play is scaffolded through parent–child interaction, so the support provided by the facilitator enables the teachers’ capacity to work independently in action research. However, whilst reinforcing the construction of Anna’s identity of a nurturing, caring teacher educator that we saw in the previous excerpt, the maternal metaphor deployed here also suggests power inequalities between the expert facilitator and the novice teachers, literally infantilising the teachers by construing them as children. The maternal metaphor is thus in tension with the democratic values espoused above. The issue of power is also evident in tensions over the establishment of shared ownership of the research, particularly in relation to decisions over how much support to give to the teachers without ‘hijacking’ (Elliott 1991) their agenda:

(Extract 6)

Interviewer: Would you say the teachers that we are working with are experiencing quite a lot of autonomy?

Anna: I have to say I was quite worried when one group I did give lots of autonomy to is the one group we haven't heard from!! Also the one group that we felt the two of them, they came in late (forum 3 only), only to one forum, they didn't seem to know what they were doing or want to come, so it could mean that they just didn't really want to do it in the first place. I was concerned about the comments I gave them, even though it was "Would you consider doing this or doing that?". I felt what they needed was someone to tell them these are all the things you are interested in looking at, but it's too many. So I didn't actually say you should do this or you should do that. I was just trying to untangle things for them.

(Interview with Anna, CAR project facilitator)

Here, we see Anna struggling over how to support the teachers without going so far as to tell them what they 'should' do. On the one hand, Anna clearly felt uncomfortable enacting a directive role as a group leader in the project; but on the other hand, she felt it was her role to provide information and support to the teachers in order to encourage and enable them to initiate a feasible research activity for themselves. Her frustration—and her ambivalent identity as caring teacher versus proactive leader—are signalled by the emphatic (indicated in the transcript by the double exclamation marks) declaration that this 'is the one group we haven't heard from!!'. In Extract 7 below, we see Anna continuing to negotiate her identities as a project leader as she struggles with her discomfort and worries about the *tension* between her roles as a university information provider, handing down details about the project to the other(ised) teacher-participants, *versus* the role she is clearly more comfortable with as a facilitator and negotiator of roles and responsibilities in the collaborative action research project:

(Extract 7)

I felt quite uncomfortable during the forum because I felt first I was teaching in a way I don't usually teach, such as using a Power Point and out of my comfort zone and the dynamics between the groups. No connection and lots of silent periods. I was a bit worried about how everyone would become cohesive with each other in the research teams in schools and with the University and how each school team would react to one another, I was really quite worried about that.

(Interview with Anna, CAR project facilitator)

Recalling this, her first meeting (held at the university) with Carol, Jennifer and other school teachers, Anna worries about the lack of connection and the silences that indicate that the cohesion and group rapport she sees as critical for constructing a group identity are absent. As part of these anxieties, she notes her struggle to enact the role of a facilitator in the CAR project, reflected in her concerns about her positioning as expert and her didactic and non-dialogic presentation style, which she clearly felt was different from her 'normal' practice.

These tensions suggest that Anna was navigating the construction of her identity as the collaborative action research facilitator whilst drawing on a range of discourses to make sense of *who she is* as a facilitator, illustrating the negotiated nature of identity. In the following extract, we see how such negotiated identities are constructed relationally as we see Anna locating her identity in relation to other facilitators in the team:

(Extract 8)

Interviewer: how do you think your style differs from other group leaders?

Anna: The difference is perhaps I am a lot more tentative and a lot less experienced in doing this sort of thing. So I am learning as everybody else is learning, but I think about how to do action research and what it means to be in the process. Probably someone like Mark or Sue who have done this sort of thing before, they see the reason why they are doing all these things, they see the big picture, whereas I am still at the bottom trying to find out what the big picture is!... I feel I am at that stage where they're at, but doing slightly different things, but I can respond to the teachers at a much more equal level, not just someone from the University, but someone trying to find out about something, so perhaps that helps other people [teachers] to relax. Also I also feel insecure about it, so I want to give the support to other people so they don't feel that way.

(Interview with Anna, CAR project facilitator)

Here, we see Anna constructing her identity through the similarities and differences between her and the other group leaders in the CAR project. As a novice, she emphasises her role as a learner in the action research project but turns this potential weakness into a strength by arguing that she did things differently, including providing a high level of support for the teachers and working with them as more of an equal, *'not just [as] someone from the University, but someone trying to find out about something'*.

Overall, the analysis of the interviews with Anna indicates a considerable degree of tension and personal struggle in negotiating her identities in the CAR project. In particular, her desire to enact the role of a caring, supportive and democratic facilitator was in direct tension with her positioning as an expert and authoritative group leader. These tensions are made explicit in her use of the maternal metaphor, thereby positioning the teachers as children, and in the frustrations she expressed in relation to her attempts to foster independence in the teachers. In this way, Anna's ambiguities exemplify the tensions and contradictions between solidarity and dominance inherent in the discourse of collaborative practices in contemporary modern society. Collaboration is both supportive and oppressive, involving commitment and confusion, a practice literally embodying the contradictions inherent in the notion of empowering and emancipating others, particularly in the context of the institutionalised status differentials between school and university educators.

Discussion

The analysis of data in this chapter has shown that identity formation in the context of the collaborative action research project is multiple, shifting and complex, a site of tension rather than a source of stability.

Overall, we find that Carol was more consistent in actively defining her identity, resisting the identity of the researcher as defined by the university researchers and retaining her primary identifications as a classroom teacher and school-based assessment coordinator with pragmatic rather than theoretical concerns. This was

Table 6.1 Desirable/undesirable collaboration practices as constructed by Carol

Desirable	Undesirable
Collaborative action research has to be useful for the school and students	Collaborative practices which do not benefit the school
University facilitators provide practical support to help teachers do action research	University facilitators not providing practical support to the teachers
Collaborative action research which is useful professional development	Collaborative practices which do not help teachers learn
Sharing action research data with other teachers	No opportunities to share with other teachers

evident in her expectations and priorities in the project, which included such things as strategies to assist her students in improving their performance in group discussions, tangible improvements in her students' language performance in the action research project and the overall alignment of the collaborative action research project agenda with the needs of her school. Her pragmatic concerns were also evident in the way she foregrounded the need for support from the facilitators. Table 6.1 summarises the 'desirable' and 'undesirable' aspects of collaborative action research practices for Carol.

In contrast to Carol, who persistently returns to her classroom teacher identity and resisting the attempts by the collaborative action research project to position her as co-researcher, we find that Anna struggled more to harmonise the role of a caring, supportive and democratic facilitator with her positioning within the project as an expert and authoritative group leader. The analysis also shows that this construction of identity occurs within the context of broader social, political and economic discourses operating in society, which intersects in complex ways and which are themselves replete with complexities. Thus, university education staff members are pulled between competing identifications as teacher educators or as educational researchers, while teachers struggle with the differing demands of academic, pastoral and collegial pressures. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, the data provide evidence of differing dimensions of identity constructed in conflict with each other. Table 6.2 summarises some of the 'desirable' and 'undesirable' facilitation practices as construed in Anna's interview texts.

Table 6.2 Desirable/undesirable facilitation practices as constructed by Anna

Desirable	Undesirable
Giving teachers lots of information on how to do action research	Forcing teachers to do what they don't want to do
Giving teachers lots of support at the initial phase of the collaboration process	Giving teachers too much autonomy (low support)
Helping teachers draft and revise the action research plan	Imposing ideas on teachers
Sharing the decision making process with teachers	Making decisions for teachers
Being tentative	Being directive

The oppositions in the table suggests that Anna was not just constructing her own identity in the texts, ‘context free’ as it were, but rather that she struggled to balance identity of the group leader and facilitator within which she was positioned by the university with her own desires to be perceived as an egalitarian and democratic facilitator as first among equals. She also struggled between the non-directive approach identified as ‘good practice’ for facilitating collaborative practices in teacher education literature (Burns 1999; Carr and Kemmis 1986; Elliott 1991) and the high levels of support and input expected by the teachers she was working with.

As we saw with Anna’s identity formation, Carol’s constructions did not arise in a vacuum; rather, they reflected her institutionally situated, as well as her individual, concerns (Fairclough 2003; Giddens 1991; Walshaw 2007). But, whereas Anna remained caught in the tension between her own preference for a non-directive, democratic group leader identity and the teachers’ desire for a more directive approach, Carol managed the tension between her institutional–individual teacher identity and the projects’ positioning of her as a novice researcher more decisively, coming down firmly on the side of the former. In each case, the process of identification was dependent on understandings and values deemed to be of value in relation to collaboration, which in turn rely on their distinction from undesirable practices in relation to collaboration.

Summary

As discussed in Chaps. 1 and 3, collaboration is a term with mainly positive connotations in education with a large literature advocating its merits. But ideals aside, collaboration is socially and institutionally located and as a result identity formation in the context of collaborative practices will depend on individuals’ own reflexive understandings of and response to their intra- and inter-institutionally situated self (Giddens 1991). Herein lies the potential for both harmony and discord, clarity and confusion, intransigence and transformation. Both Anna and Carol appeared to feel most comfortable (re-)enacting their habituated institutional identities (as the teacher educator and the English teacher) and they resisted the positioning offered by the CAR project: as expert-leader in Anna’s case or as novice researcher in Carol’s case. The findings thus suggest that teachers and facilitators in this Hong Kong CAR project retained their institutional ‘identities’—fraught though this process was, particularly in Anna’s case—as they navigated the demands of collaborative action research practices, rather than ‘forging’ new identities to mark joint ownership. In this process of maintaining and revising their identities, they were each struggling to meet the needs of their new and different circumstances, while retaining links with established, tried and trusted familiar identities. In sum, the analysis shows identity formation in the context of school–university collaboration is much more complex than stated in the CAR literature. These issues will be further examined in the final chapter.

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Chapter 7

The Politics of Collaboration: Implications for Teacher Education in Contemporary Contexts

Introduction

Collaboration is one of the most common solutions given to resolve problems in contemporary society. The ideals of community, collegiality and team work are often powerfully presented in discourse and difficult to resist because they promise so much—hope, security, high trust, reward, resource, success and strength to change practices that we cannot do alone. A case in point, Google the word collaboration and click images, then you will see hundreds of positive imageries and quotes (e.g. Keep calm and collaborate. Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much) associated with the term. Without a doubt, the concept of collaboration has become legitimate and hegemonic in many contemporary discourses including in teacher education.

This book adopted a critical discourse analysis approach to examine the discourses of collaboration collected from a Hong Kong collaborative action research case study. Chapters 4–6 have highlighted some of the tensions, contradictions and complexities experienced by teachers and researchers in negotiating collaboration in the context of education reform. Adopting a CDA framework enabled me to examine critically how the teachers and researchers made sense of the collaboration experience in the wider sociocultural context. In examining texts in context, I was able to identify the tensions arising from the practice of enacting collaboration across and within institutional cultures, and debunk some of the taken for granted ‘truths’ about collaboration as a social practice. This chapter provides a final discussion of the issues and questions raised in the earlier chapters. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part provides a discussion of the major findings and issues. The aim is to integrate the findings with existing theories and research on collaboration practices with a view to addressing the following key research questions:

1. What discourses are operative in school–university collaboration in the socio-cultural context of Hong Kong?

2. How are beliefs, interpersonal relations and identity negotiated in collaborative action research?
3. What tensions and complexities operate in collaborative action research discourse in an educational context?
4. Given the above factors and influences, to what extent can school–university collaboration be ‘achieved’ as praxis for the professional development of teachers and teacher educators?

I begin the discussion by providing a summary of the issues that has been covered in the earlier chapters to take stock of what has been achieved in examining collaboration practices using a critical discourse analysis theoretical framework. In the second part of the chapter, I provide a discussion of the key findings from the study and present some of the underlying implications for school–university collaboration in the sociocultural context of Hong Kong. In the final part of the chapter, I will discuss some of the limitations of the case study and make recommendations for further research in other educational contexts.

Looking Back: Summary of the Issues in Chaps. 4–6

This book reported on the construction of a collaboration practice within the context of a two-year collaborative action research project (CAR) between university researchers and school teachers in Hong Kong. Chapters 4–6 critically examined how two university facilitators (Anna and I) enacted collaboration with two teachers from Green Hill Secondary School (Jennifer and Carol). Textual data from the case study were examined to theorise how collaboration was enacted in the Hong Kong sociocultural context. The theoretical framework adopted to examine the textual data in the study pushed the examination of collaboration beyond the boundaries of individual’s attitudes and views of collaboration. In examining collaboration through a critical discourse analysis lens, I was able to examine perceived constraints for collaboration in the broader social and political context of Hong Kong so as to problematise and ask critical questions about how collaboration is presented in teacher education literature and reform policy documents as well. Furthermore, analysis of the collaboration talk between the facilitators and the teachers showed the ways in which a set of rules constitutes the discourse of collaboration and how practice is constructed in the context of teacher education. However, the study also illuminated how individuals can actively participate in the on-going construction and negotiation of beliefs, power relations and identity in the context of collaborative action research. As indicated in Chaps. 1 and 3, collaboration as a body of knowledge in teacher education discourse is construed as intrinsically good for the professional development of teachers. In the context of CAR, facilitators and teachers are positioned to play specific roles in each trope of collaboration examined in Chap. 3. Complexities concerning collaboration practices are acknowledged

in these studies, but often undertheorised (Davison 2006). Problems about collaboration tend to focus on individual teachers or facilitators and ignore the broader systematic factors shaping practice. Thus, this case study provided a much needed space to foreground the complexities involved in co-constructing school–university collaboration in an educational setting.

This case study also offered an insight into the complexities of building a collaborative partnership between two different institutional cultures in a non-Western sociocultural setting. As indicated in Chap. 3, much of what has been published about the collaborative action research and partnership studies are based on research predominantly from Australia, the UK and the US. This case study presented an understanding of collaboration from a Hong Kong sociocultural perspective and problematised some of the ‘standards’ set for collaboration in existing teacher education literature produced in other contexts to consider why these standards are difficult to achieve. In problematising school–university collaboration as discourse, I was able to challenge some of the taken for granted assumptions by examining the practice from a critical perspective. The study illustrated how each collaboration theory constructed its own ‘set of rules’ to regulate social practice. In Chap. 3, I examined how these tropes of collaboration appeared in teacher education literature in the Hong Kong and global contexts using Foucault’s idea of genealogy to trace how power relations, knowledge and subjectivity concerning collaboration as a professional practice for teachers are located in the discourse. Three tropes shaping school–university collaboration were identified and problematised: collaboration to improve practice; collaboration for emancipation; and collaboration for educational partnership.

What has been indicated in this book is the powerful ways in which collaboration discourses operate in a given society also shape practice. The findings from the CAR case study suggest that collaboration as a social practice is dependent on factors such as how well resourced individuals are and what particular ideological and political factors are ‘driving’ collaboration practices in a particular sociocultural context. As indicated in Chap. 3, school–university collaboration was highly prominent in government education policies shaping continuing professional development activities for teachers in Hong Kong at the time of the study (e.g. the CAR project was funded by the Hong Kong government’s Quality Education Fund) so collaboration was presented as a way to build Hong Kong English language teachers’ capacity to implement school-based assessment practices. Moreover, the findings from the case study indicated that collaboration practice between the university and school is politically and ideologically, as well as pedagogically, motivated in the context of Hong Kong because large scale collaborative action research projects are funded largely by the Government. Thus, what the findings indicate is how collaboration discourses have penetrated and shaped the discursive construction of professional development for teachers in the Hong Kong sociocultural context. Namely, the discourse of collaboration foregrounded in the Hong Kong policy documents had morphed into social practice without teachers and researchers questioning why they should collaborate.

Key Findings

This section has five subsections. Each sub-section provides a summative discussion of the key findings from the analysis of the data in Chaps. 4–6 to address the main research questions presented at the beginning in of this chapter.

Tensions and Complexities in Negotiating Collaboration

As highlighted in Chap. 1, the term collaboration in the context of education conveys many meanings. In professional development literature the practice carries assumptions of equality, shared values and unproblematic partnership between institutions. However, the analysis of the data in the case study suggests that school–university collaboration in the Hong Kong sociocultural context is, in practice, more problematic and complex than how it is construed in teacher education literature. Furthermore, the findings suggest that prominent discursive formations associated with school–university collaboration such as shared goals, empowerment, mutuality and equity are, in practice, difficult to achieve. The study also highlighted that these discursive formations of collaboration are highly fluid in that they can be negotiated, reconstructed and contested by teachers and facilitators in the context of collaborative action research. Hence the tropes of collaboration in this Hong Kong CAR case study reflected the societal and institutional needs of the teachers and facilitators. For example, the discursive formation prominently foregrounded in the data, by the teachers and the facilitators, was to improve student learning and collaboration to support teachers in implementing assessment changes in the context of education reform in Hong Kong.

The first key finding was that school–university collaboration in a contemporary context entails agency—discourse plays a key role in shaping practice, but individual actions can also reshape discourse (Giddens 1984). So, the collaboration practice enacted in this case was regulated by other social practices operating at the time of the collaborative action research project in Hong Kong, including the dominant professional development and reform discourses, but the study also suggests that practice is negotiated and revised by the teachers and facilitators working together in CAR. In Chaps. 4–6, it was highlighted that collaboration is complex and difficult to define because individuals play an active role in revising and contesting social discourses that shape collaborative practices in a situated context. For example, the teachers foregrounded their role as learners rather than as co-researchers to contest the tropes of shared ownership and equity prominent in school–university collaboration literature. In negotiating and revising the ‘rules’ for collaboration, the CAR project became a “site of struggle over meaning and identity” as the teachers and facilitators negotiated and renegotiated collaboration as a system of beliefs, interpersonal relations and identities (Talbot et al. 2003, p. 74).

This suggests that collaboration is not a fixed entity, but is an ongoing process of negotiation—the teachers and researchers collaborating in an inter-institutional context strive to construct a practice that they want to determine as social reality through enacting beliefs, power relations and identities through language. For this reason, collaboration is negotiated in the sense that individuals can resist and contest discourses which shape practice. Thus, a second key finding in the CAR case study was that the teachers and facilitators co-constructed a collaboration practice that was reflective of their individual institutional and societal practices, as highlighted in the analysis of the data in Chaps. 4 and 5.

Beliefs About Collaboration

The third key finding was the teachers and facilitators in the CAR case study presented a highly pragmatic construction of school–university collaboration and teacher development. It seemed that collaborative action research as a social practice was negotiated by the teachers and facilitators to best serve their respective institutional goals. For example, collaboration was co-constructed as a practice of school–university ‘cooperation’ in the case study and there were different understandings of the practice by the collaborators. For the English language teachers, collaboration was understood as a practice for resource sharing so that they can help their students do well in the new assessment structure. For the university teacher educators, it was understood to be a practice to ‘develop’ teachers’ awareness of the underlying principles of formative assessment so that they can implement SBA effectively in schools. For example, it was highlighted in Chaps. 4 and 6 that teachers from Green Hill Secondary School were concerned that their students would underperform in the new school-based assessment component of the new senior secondary curriculum introduced in Hong Kong at the time of the project because their school is not an elite school which adopts English as a medium of instruction. So, a major reason for collaboration was to improve the students’ overall performance in the new assessment structure. From this perspective, change in practice was predominantly shaped by the pragmatic needs of the reform and the teachers had participated in the CAR project because they perceived it to be practical and useful for their students and school. Hence, acquiring practical input related to school-based assessment in the collaborative action research project was a key motivation for their participation in the project. Moreover, the findings also showed that the teachers foregrounded their identities as teachers implementing reform rather for self-development, so collaboration was constructed in the case study predominantly as an institutional decision rather than as a personal choice by the teachers. In this connection, the case study illuminated that school–university collaboration has to be understood in a situated context of institutional and societal practices.

To sum up, the study shows that the teachers constructed their own set of conditions for school–university collaboration, different to the conditions set by

collaborative action research literature that foreground teacher empowerment and emancipation as important conditions to achieve school–university collaboration (Atweh et al. 1998; Carr and Kemmis 1986; Kincheloe 2003; Oja and Smulyan 1989). Collaboration in the case study was different to the teacher education literature in that it was very practice-oriented, and it was likely that the teachers did action research because they had the support of the university researchers. The data showed that the teachers had limited knowledge of doing action research and so perceived the teacher educators as experts who were there to help them. For example, the facilitation team helped the teachers revise their action research plan and also organised the technical support to video record the teachers' lessons during the action research cycles. So, the facilitators had to provide high level of practical and explicit support for the teachers in the collaboration process otherwise the teachers would not have completed their action research projects. Hence, the fourth key finding of the study was that the conditions for school–university collaboration in this case study were primarily shaped by the practical demands of the curriculum reform in the Hong Kong sociocultural context at the time of the study. Thus, social practices such as school–university collaboration have tensions and complexities and so they have to be problematised and understood in the broader context of current competing social, economic, ideological and institutional agendas.

Beliefs About Professional Development

The fifth finding was that the teachers' understanding of professional development in the case study was different to how it is presented in broader teacher education literature. For example, collaboration discourses have shifted the representations of 'professional learning' from the individual to the collective (peer learning, peer appraisals, collaborative action research, partnership and mentoring programmes) and teachers who contest collaborative practices appear in the discourses as 'lone wolves' and are positioned in the discourse as being 'isolated' and 'restricted' professionals (Kincheloe 2003). Collaboration is presented in teacher education discourse as a way for teachers to 'redefine' and 'renew' professional life (Elliott 1991; McLaughlin and Talbert 2006; Mitchell-Williams et al. 2004; Oja and Smulyan 1989). Collaborative action research is, in this view, constructed as an awareness raising activity and positions teachers as working with university researchers to develop a critical understanding of their own practice and situation. Furthermore, the term critical is core to this construction of CAR. It suggests collaboration through practices such as action research can 'liberate' teachers from the 'irrationality' of practice and for teachers to 'exercise' their professional 'power' to 'restore' self-understanding and social justice (Atweh et al. 1998; Carr and Kemmis 1986). This view of professional development positions collaboration as a way to improve practice and to expose social injustice in education (Kincheloe 2003). However, the teachers in the Hong Kong case study contested this critical construct of collaborative learning.

As indicated in Chap. 1, this study examined the practice of school–university collaboration at a time when key educational reforms were being implemented in secondary schools in Hong Kong. Collaboration was presented as the answer to solve challenges arising from the implementation of a new assessment practice in all schools in Hong Kong. Many teachers and parents at the time had questions about the feasibility of introducing school-based assessment into the Hong Kong curriculum so school–university collaboration was presented as common sense knowledge to regulate the successful implementation of reform. The teachers in the texts positioned the assessment reform as an important change in the curriculum, but they also foregrounded uncertainties of how to implement the reform successfully in their school. It could be argued that the teachers primarily invested in this CAR project to gain information to help them implement curriculum change, but enacting equal ownership was not a key motivation for collaboration. So, the teachers did not participate in the CAR project for their own personal professional development needs, but as a way to improve the practice of the new school-based assessment in their school. The teachers appeared to view collaboration as a ‘service’ to their school and students rather than as professional practice for empowerment. The teachers did not perceive the collaborative action research as being significantly different to attending professional development courses at an institution, which is a common practice of in-service training provided for in-service teachers in Hong Kong. In terms of the collaboration relationship, the facilitators were positioned as advisors and professional development tutors and the power differential between the teachers and facilitators in the project was apparent, even though the facilitators did self-position, at least to some degree, as (novice) researchers to reduce the power difference between themselves and the teachers. Thus, the findings suggest that collaboration practice is never neutral, but that the teachers and the facilitators in the case study enacted a particular collaboration practice in line with collaboration discourses sanctioned in the professional development policy documents currently circulating in Hong Kong. Thus, professional development was constructed in the case study as practical training for implementing school-based assessment rather than as a practice to empower the professional self.

Negotiating Power Relations in CAR

The sixth finding was that shared power and equity were not achieved in the CAR case study. The analysis of the data in Chap. 5 suggested that the discursive construction of interpersonal relations in school–university and intra-university collaboration was highly complex in the Hong Kong sociocultural context. The facilitators in this case study managed power relations by downplaying their institutional roles to foreground democracy and group solidarity in the context of the case study. At the same time, there were contradictions and tensions in the textual data, for example the teachers contested the democratic set up constructed by facilitators. Thus, the key decisions in the CAR

project were made predominantly by the university researchers and the teachers resisted embracing the identity of the co-researcher. For example, in Chap. 5, the analysis highlighted that the teachers did not foreground empowerment and resisted presenting themselves as having equal status with the university facilitators, even though democratic collaboration is emphasised in collaborative discourses advocating the practice of new professionalism (Cochran-Smith and Fries 2001; Quicke 2000). What is meant by new professionalism in the context of teacher education is the discursive ensemble which foregrounds reflective practice and critical understanding: the process whereby teachers and researchers working as a group ‘turn around’ upon themselves (Quicke 2000). Quicke (2000) suggests that this discourse of new professionalism has been prominent in institutional discourses since the turn of the twenty-first century and has regulated how professionalism is understood in contemporary society. According to Quicke (2000), what is problematic about this understanding of collaboration is the emphasis on the notion of developing a single vision for practice. However, this construction of collaboration in which a single vision is imposed on everyone ignores the complexities of institutional culture and politics operating in the sociopolitical context. This criticism of institutionalised collaboration as a practice for professional development is also highlighted in other studies of collaboration (Hargreaves 1994; Lefever-Davis et al. 2007; Siskin 1994; Stewart 2006). In this understanding, collaboration is presented as a democratic practice to encourage collaborative cultures in institutions including schools and universities. But at the same time, it is argued that reform which aims to foster collaboration often conceals the extent to which power operates, in a manner that Foucault (1985, 1990) describes, as ‘capillary power’ regulating professional practices through the institutional body. Capillary power suggests that power circulates everywhere and operates at regional and institutional levels. Foucault’s (1985, 1990) concept of ‘capillary power’ provides a space to problematise the relationship between power and resistance in regulating social practices in contemporary society. As Foucault (1978, p. 94) puts it:

Power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations. ...Power comes from below; that is there is no binary and all encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix.

Foucault’s (1978) understanding of power is not simply a set of relations between the oppressor and the oppressed, but as a network so power circulates everywhere including micro and macro politics of everyday life (Fraser 1989; Olssen 1999). Foucault conceptualised power as a chain or a net in which “individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application” (1978, p. 98). Another understanding of the Foucault’s conceptualisation of power is that individuals should not be perceived to be simply recipients of power, but as the place where power is enacted and resisted (Faubion 1994; Foucault 1978; Mills 2003; Olssen 1999). In the context of this study, the findings suggest that establishing and maintaining equity (power), mutuality and shared goals in school–university collaboration is highly complex and difficult to achieve. Hence, the power relations

constructed in the case study between the researchers and the teachers did not adhere to the democratic ‘goal’ projected in collaborative action research literature. For example, the teachers positioned the facilitators as professional development trainers and requested direct support from the facilitators who were positioned as ‘experts’ in school-based assessment and action research. While the teachers had ownership of their action research focus at Green Hill Secondary School, in the discursive data, they did not position themselves as equal partners in the CAR project. Instead, they positioned their role as teachers working on a project for the university. Nevertheless, the teachers still exerted/exercised power in Foucault’s sense.

Furthermore, the analysis of the data in Chap. 5 suggests that the collaboration practice enacted in this case study was hierarchical. For example, in positioning the facilitators as experts, the teachers were constructing a hierarchical relationship between the teachers and the facilitators, they often equated authority with expertise. In the context of negotiating interpersonal relations, the exchange of the emails showed how the teachers expected the facilitators to ‘author-ise’ their ideas for the action research project. This was evident in the data discussed in Chap. 6. So, the findings indicated that the teachers and researchers enacted their perceived institutional identities to maintain distance and reproduce role differentials between teachers and facilitators in the CAR project. This hierarchical relationship was manifested in the politeness strategies used in the texts as a way to maintain the appearance of equity. This was illustrated in Chap. 5, where the data suggested that politeness strategies were used to maintain a sense of collegiality and to reduce the power differences between the two facilitators as well as between the researchers and the teachers. Although the teachers resisted the discourse of equity, the data showed that the two facilitators strived to embody the identity constructed in collaborative action research discourse by foregrounding the discourse of democracy. So, the facilitation strategy adopted was primarily diagnostic and action oriented to help the teachers test out ideas in their classrooms. However, the teachers in the case study also contested the democratic values set up by the facilitators to ensure that they received the support needed to do the school-based action research. So, even though the literature seems to present the underlying assumption that equity and power sharing are achievable outcomes of school–university collaboration, in practice, achieving equity is much more problematic because of competing discourses shaping practice (Stewart 2006). This was illustrated in Chaps. 5 and 6. Hence, the study suggests that the power relations co-constructed between university outside facilitators and school teachers in the Hong Kong CAR case study were highly complex social interactions, even when university researchers positioned themselves as co-learners, it did not necessarily neutralise the hierarchical power relations in the partnership. This could be because institutions are intrinsically bound up with power and are connected to the interests of particular groups in society. For example, the university legitimises its power by constructing ‘experts’ who are authorised to implement their ‘expertise’ in different contexts, thus setting

up a binary in the discourse: the ‘expert’, who is invested with institutional authority, versus the ‘non-expert’, who accommodates to the institutional norms (Benwell and Stokoe 2006). Power was inherently hierarchical in the relationship between the teachers and the facilitators in the CAR case study because the facilitators were positioned as decision-makers by the teachers and they did not claim ownership of the collaborative action research project. This suggests that the power relationship between the facilitators and the teachers was highly complex because the teachers were active in their own subordinate positioning. The study shows that that collaboration between schools and university cannot be constructed outside and beyond relations of power, even when a discourse of mutual partnership is claimed in the collaboration project.

Negotiating Identities in CAR

The seventh key finding of the study was that the teachers and facilitators in the Hong Kong CAR case study retained their institutional ‘identities’ in collaboration practices rather than ‘forging’ a new one to mark joint ownership. The study indicates that identity formation was highly fluid and the teachers and facilitators constructed, maintained and revised their identity to meet the needs of different circumstances. The analysis of the data in Chap. 6 highlighted that the teachers and facilitators were foregrounding their institutional identities. Drawing on Giddens’ (1991) construct of the reflexive self, it could be argued that the teachers and facilitators negotiated their own particular brand of identity, drawing on their own narratives as well as the social and institutional discourse circulating in the Hong Kong sociocultural context at the time of the study. The study also indicates that the facilitators in this case study were the ones who were predominantly enacting the role of the adviser, evaluator and praise giver. This role positioned the facilitators as the more knowledgeable half of the partnership than the teachers. In positioning the facilitators as experts in the texts, the teachers were reinforcing the facilitators’ identities as the ‘authority’ on school-based assessment and research (Stewart 2006). In the discourse analysis of the data, there were many examples of the teachers positioning themselves as ‘learners’ and inexperienced researchers. This discourse was also used by the teachers to rationalise their resistance to the researcher’s identity. Furthermore, the colliding discourses in the context of the CAR project also offered the teachers and facilitators competing ways of shaping, maintaining and revising their identities and giving meaning to the collaborative relationship. Some of the discourses validated how collaboration is presented in teacher education and school–university partnership discourses, for example the tropes of collaboration discussed in Chap. 3. Other discourses are in conflict with the egalitarian discourses foregrounded in the literature of collaborative action research.

The professional identities of the teachers and facilitators in the case study often appeared as complex and complicated. For example, the facilitators' roles shifted during the collaboration process. They were positioned as university tutors, action research experts, professional mentors, and professional development leaders by the teachers. There was uncertainty in how the teachers positioned the self in the project. Sometimes, they seemed uncomfortable enacting the role of the project owner and action researcher, and preferred to position themselves as learners. In this way, the identities in the project were negotiated and managed through the different discourses on offer to the teachers and facilitators in the situated socio-cultural context of school–university collaboration. The implication so far is that establishing clear role relations in collaboration practices is much more complex than how it appears in teacher education literature. In reality, it is more likely that roles enacted by the facilitators and teachers in the collaborative action research project are complex, ambiguous and improvisatory.

Summary of the Key Findings

This subsection provides a summary to the key findings and issues discussed in this chapter so far. Table 7.1 presents the three different understandings of collaboration discussed in Chap. 1. The findings in this study suggest that teachers and facilitators predominantly understood collaboration as an exchange of intellectual resources to acquire their own institutional goals (Practice 2).

According to this table, Practice 2 was enacted by the teachers and facilitators in the CAR project. Practice 1 was foregrounded in collaboration literature, but was not achieved in this case study. The teachers in this CAR case study were not given time release to participate in the CAR project and in the initial phase, Carol and Jennifer expressed concerns about the amount of time they were expected to devote to the CAR project. Without time release from their teaching and administrative duties from school, teachers and researchers will find it challenging to move towards a higher level of collaboration such as Practice 1, which is presented as being more desirable in teacher education literature. Practice 3 is perceived to be the most undesirable practice for school–university collaboration (Hargreaves 1994; Johnson and Johnson 2002). In teacher education discourse, practice 3 is often juxtaposed with practice 1 to show the dichotomy between what Hargreaves (1994) calls 'true collaboration' and 'contrived collegiality' in the context of collaboration. Although the teachers were not 'forced' to participate in the project, the analysis of the data suggests that to some extent collaboration was enacted by the teachers and facilitators at a superficial level. The findings seem to suggest that while the Hong Kong teachers and researchers may have volunteered to participate in the CAR project, their motivation was largely influenced by the curriculum reform in Hong Kong. So, the collaboration practice constructed in the case study to some extent reflected the view of inter-institutional 'cooperation' (see Chap. 3), where it refers to a person or a group of people (e.g. the teachers) who cooperate with the more

Table 7.1 Practices of collaboration

Collaboration practices	Description	Descriptors
Practice 1	Collaboration as joint intellectual endeavour to acquire shared professional goals	Teachers and facilitators understand collaboration as working jointly together as an intellectual endeavour. Collaboration between partners is constructed as mutually beneficial and democratic—a form of collaboration that entails the sharing of intellectual knowledge and resources or same goals. These partnerships are presented as mutual agreements that claim to improve professional skills. Teachers and facilitators understand collaboration as a ‘community of practice’ and collaboration is constructed as an ‘entity’ with shared beliefs, values, knowledge and customs. School–university collaboration is presented as practice for collaborators to ‘exercise’ professional ‘power’ to ‘restore’ self-understanding. Participants in the project are all invested in the same common goals and have a collective vision
Practice 2	Collaboration as an ‘exchange’ of intellectual resources to acquire different institutional goals	Teachers and facilitators understand collaboration as ‘prescriptive’ and ‘highly pragmatic’ to meet their individual institutional needs and goals. Collaboration standards are contextualized to reflect the needs of participants. Collaborators may not share common goals or professional agendas. Collaboration is enacted as ‘willing cooperation’ between teachers and facilitators to achieve individual goals. Mutuality is understood as an ‘exchange’ of intellectual resources to help each other achieve own agenda. For example, teachers and facilitators collaborate to investigate a common topic related to practice, but may not necessarily share same motivations for collaboration. Collaboration—each helping the other to achieve own goals. Participants in the project are invested in the differing goals and may or may not have a collective vision

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

Collaboration practices	Description	Descriptors
Practice 3	Collaboration as 'enforced' cooperation	This practice of collaboration is administered and enforced by managers. Collaboration is highly contrived because it is not voluntary. Collaboration practice is institutionalised Teachers collaborate with university researchers because they 'have been told' by their managers. This understanding of collaboration is restricted to a superficial level of cooperation between teachers and facilitators. There is no individual commitment or investment in the collaboration practice

powerful partner (e.g. the university researchers) for professional reasons. The university researchers were perceived by the teachers to be a resource because they were positioned as SBA experts. This construction of collaboration suggests that the teachers cooperated with the university researchers to gain access to resources needed by the school in order to implement the assessment reform successfully. Moreover, the teachers in the case study also resisted enacting the role of the researcher and instead, they sought research approval from the facilitators throughout the project. The representation of the facilitators as teaching experts in the data suggests that teachers and researchers collaborating in the Hong Kong case study enacted a traditional understanding of school–university collaboration, which positions university facilitators as the knowledge provider and the teachers as trainees. Thus, the teachers in the case study data did not adhere to the tropes of collaboration projected in teacher education literature presenting school–university collaboration (see Chap. 3). Instead, the teachers and facilitators negotiated their own understanding of collaboration to reflect their institutional agendas.

This Hong Kong collaborative action research case study highlighted different tensions and complexities in the construction of collaboration between school teachers and university researchers. It has also highlighted ambiguity in the negotiation of collegial collaboration between the university researchers working together to support the teachers. It seems that collaboration practices between schools and universities are politically and ideologically situated in the context of Hong Kong and no doubt elsewhere too. The study shows that collaboration is not a 'neutral' occurring event, but is socially constructed through discourse as shown in the theoretical framework, Fig. 7.1.

The study confirms that collaboration is not a neutral or private response to a professional development activity, but is socially organised and managed through sociopolitical and sociocultural discourses and norms circulating in the current

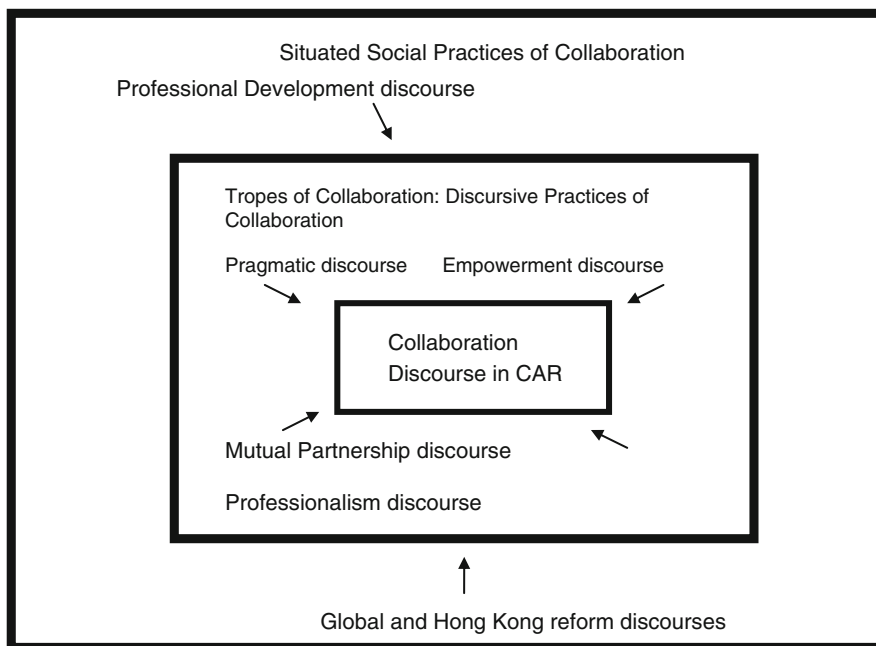


Fig. 7.1 The construction of CAR in the case study

Hong Kong context—what is said and done in collaboration is regulated by discourses circulating within the institutional and societal levels. But at the same time, individuals can renegotiate practice by contesting these discourses. For example, collaboration as a practice appeared as ‘rational’ and ‘necessary’ for educational change in Hong Kong at the time of this case study and this understanding was foregrounded in the way teachers talked about their motivation for participating in the collaborative action research project. However, in the CAR case study, the teachers resisted this ‘rational’ construction of collaboration and negotiated their own terms for collaboration. In sum, the key findings suggest that the collaboration practice enacted in the Hong Kong case study was different to how collaboration is construed in teacher education literature.

The Implications of the Study

This section first reviews the context of collaboration in Hong Kong and then examines the implications for school–university collaboration in the light of the findings of this case study.

School–University Collaboration as a Practice for Professional Development in Hong Kong

Teachers in recent years have been asked to subscribe to the ‘evidence-based performance’ agenda for example (Cochran-Smith and Fries 2001; Day and Sachs 2004). This discourse foregrounds democracy and accountability, but at the same time it subjugates teachers to a wide range of additional professional development practices which add to their workload. Common to these discourses is the ‘mission’ to improve performance and technical skills of teachers, thus enhancing student learning outcomes. The types of professional development offered to teachers in Hong Kong have also shifted with the change in the discourse. The “one size fits all,” model of professional development has been replaced with approaches which allow teachers to learn from their own practice through self-directed and inquiry-based activities such as action research, drawing on the notion of the reflective practitioner as described by both Dewey (1910, 1916) and Schon (1983). However, the systematic and reflective practice of collaborative action research as defined by Burns (1999, 2009), Elliott (1991) and Carr and Kemmis (1986), carried out by teachers with the potential to develop teachers’ critical understanding of practice, is unlikely to be achievable in a public-funded project which aims to support the implementation of reform (Ponte 2005). Ponte (2005) suggests that teachers collaborating with researchers in a large scale public-funded project will not usually determine the research agenda. Furthermore, if teachers cannot set the research agenda then it would be even harder for them to overcome practical constraints including time limitation; the conflicting demands of teaching and researching; a burgeoning workload; the lack of research skills; and the lack of support from colleagues and students. These constraints were identified as particularly significant by Tinker Sachs (2002) in another collaborative action research study with Hong Kong primary teachers.

The findings in this case study showed that the teachers and facilitators had their own institutional agenda for the CAR project. One of the main motivations for collaboration presented in the textual data was to acquire new strategies to implement school-based assessment practices, which teachers perceived to be important for raising students’ achievements in the implementation of Hong Kong’s New Senior Secondary Curriculum. As indicated in Chap. 1, the CAR case study was presented by the university team as a capacity building project and it was initiated at a time when Hong Kong was undergoing key curriculum reform in the secondary education structure. One of the key changes was the introduction of a school-based assessment component to the English language syllabus for the Hong Kong Certificate of Education exam. The data indicate that the teachers wanted to achieve practical outcomes from working with university researchers in the project. The practical outcomes can be divided into the following three strands:

- Gaining new teaching skills to implement the new curriculum reform
- Learn how to give quality feedback to students in school-based assessment activities
- Acquisition of English language teaching knowledge from collaborating with university researchers

The three strands of motivation for collaboration suggest that the teachers in this case study harboured some concerns in implementing school-based assessment practices stipulated by Hong Kong's curriculum reform and that these concerns were in tension with the aspiration of collaborative action research as presented in the literature.

It appears that despite the many changes in education paradigms and policies, there has been a gap in current research devoted to the critical examination of professional development as a social practice for teachers. The findings of this study suggest that teacher education discourses advocating a particular practice of professional development can also subjugate teachers. For example, teachers can be empowered by the discourse in the inquiry-based model of continuing professional development which presents itself as teacher-centred and school-based, but at the same time this discourse subjugate teachers to the tropes of lifelong learning, professional renewal and empowerment, as if they are natural and achievable (Day and Sachs 2004). As Foucault (1983, pp. 231–232) said:

My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do.

Foucault (1983) is clarifying how he understands the role of critique. In saying that everything is dangerous, he is proposing that we need to move beyond the search for solutions by challenging our comfortable assumptions about truth. Truth, for Foucault, is negotiated. This study found that literature advocating collaborative action research presents an overly optimistic view of equity between university researchers and school teachers. Constraints are acknowledged, but not problematised in a critical way. Collaborative action research discourse often presents researchers and teachers as having equal status and assumes that teachers and researchers may share the same goals. In reality, schools and university are likely to have different motivations and agendas for collaboration because of the ideological and political agendas in which collaboration projects are situated (Franklin et al. 2004; Walshaw 2007). For example, the CAR project was a publically funded project by the Hong Kong government to build teachers' capacity to implement curriculum change and educational reform. The CAR project was initiated by the university researchers and teachers were 'recruited' by the research team to participate in the collaborative action research. Thus, despite the appearance of equity in the partnership discourse, power is inherent in this framework for school–university collaboration.

This case study has provided an in-depth critical illustration of why collaboration is difficult to achieve in the Hong Kong sociocultural context. Further research is needed to examine the contentious issues of collaborative learning among educators,

if school-based development is to be successfully implemented. Similarly, studies need to be done in examining the complex issues surrounding school–university collaboration as social practice. For example, in the stream of new professionalism discourse, which presents school–university collaboration as a form of knowledge exchange and professional development as a continuous and on-going practice for educators, an assumption is made that teachers and researchers should work together, yet differences in institutional situating are ignored or minimalised. The discourse also positions teachers as being responsible for their own professional development, yet it does not problematise the additional workload created for teachers. I now go on to consider the study’s implications for policy and practice.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The first implication from the study is that policy makers who advocate school–university collaboration need to reconsider the way collaboration is presented to teachers and university researchers in policy documents. The study indicates that collaboration motivated by reform initiatives has practical outcomes, but at the same time limits the potential for more sustainable, reflective and critical collaboration practices which are advocated in teacher education literature as being useful for ‘professional growth’ (Carr and Kemmis 1986). Teachers who only collaborate with university researchers to implement curriculum reform may perceive collaborative action research as a mode of trainer-led professional development. In the context of the collaboration process, they may resist experimenting with new teaching practices for the fear of making ‘mistakes’. As shown in the data, the teachers in this case study became very dependent on the research facilitators for input and guidance. The study suggests that collaboration has to be understood within the broader sociocultural context to identify the interplay of forces that shape relations, identities and practices constructed. Examining the discourse of collaboration through a critical lens can provide a much needed space for challenging current practices of collaboration which are advocated as ‘good’ and ‘necessary’ in teacher education discourse. Based on this first implication I would like to suggest a number of propositions.

A first proposition is for policy makers to resist presenting school–university collaboration as a panacea for resolving educational problems in schools. A second proposition is the need to provide teachers and schools with resources to initiate and facilitate school-based collaboration practices with colleagues and students. For example, teachers who participated in this case study acquired an understanding of collaboration as social learning process, but they need resources if they are to sustain the collaboration for professional practice in the context of their school with other teachers and students. This would be a way to support teachers who are interested in initiating further cycles of action research beyond the CAR project time frame. For example, teachers need resources to pay for professional technical support to facilitate the collection of audio visual data and research support to

facilitate transcriptions and analysis of written documents. Another explanation for the low level of collaboration achieved in the CAR project was because the facilitators and teachers had different levels of commitment to the project. Jennifer and Carol were full-time teachers and they did not get time release from their teaching duties to participate in the CAR project. To reach a higher depth of collaboration, one recommendation is for teachers to have time released from teaching duties to collaborate with university researchers.

The second implication from the study is that university researchers who initiate projects with schools need to be 'upfront' about power inequalities (Burns 1999; Somekh 1994). The study suggests that joint ownership and equity in collaborative projects are difficult to sustain and achieve. Though researchers were in some sense novices in the CAR Project, they were perceived as being the experts by the teachers from Green Hill. This study has shown how tropes of collaboration played a critical role in concealing power inequities and in legitimising a particular practice for collaboration. Thus, researchers who initiate projects should problematise 'rules' of collaboration and consider how teachers are positioned in the collaboration framework. The facilitation framework for school–university collaboration has to be highly flexible and at the same time, meet teachers' contextual needs. The study also suggests that it is useful for university researchers to critically evaluate collaboration as a process and practice to address the issues of power and control.

The third implication from the study is that collaborative action research facilitators need to be aware of the roles they play and the language they use in the process of enacting and negotiating collaboration with teachers. In exploring the way power works in school–university collaboration, this study suggests that facilitators need to be aware of how power is exercised as a discursive event and as social practice (Fairclough 2003; Tusting 2005). The study highlighted tensions and complexities in teachers and researchers negotiating interpersonal relationships. The notions of equity and shared ownership in CAR are difficult to achieve because teachers and university researchers have different social status, different institutional positioning, and unequal access to resources in the Hong Kong sociocultural context. The study shows that the relationship was mediated predominantly by the institutional identities of the teachers and facilitators. The facilitators were construed as the experts providing support and advice to the teachers, which in turn reinforced the perceived societal social status differentials between teachers and researchers (Johnston 2009; Stewart 2006). The findings suggest that negotiating shared ownership and equity in school–university collaboration is highly complex and power equity in collaboration may be difficult to achieve. Furthermore, university researchers acting as action research facilitators need to be aware that their understanding of what is meant by 'support' may be different to the teachers. For example, in constructing a support framework for collaborative action research in the Hong Kong sociocultural context, facilitators in this case study had to take into consideration the fact that the teachers they were working with had very different understanding of what is meant by 'support' and 'collaboration'. What was enacted was a practice of cooperation to exchange resources rather than as collaboration for intellectual endeavour. In this case study, the CAR facilitators had to provide

hands-on support to help teachers co-write the research plans and analyse data from the action research project. The study suggests that facilitation roles cannot be assumed, but have to be co-constructed taking into consideration the sociocultural context in which the collaboration practice is enacted.

Implications for Further Research

At present, our understanding of collaboration practices in an educational context is predominantly drawn from CAR literature emanating from Western countries such as the UK, the US and Australia. While there has been some international research which elucidates the benefits and problems of school–university collaboration (Hargreaves 1994; Siskin 1994; Somekh 1994), there has been inadequate literature examining the situated practices of teachers and researchers ‘learning’ together or studies that ‘problematise’ collaboration as a practice. Critical analysis of educational practices offers educational researchers ‘a space’ for challenging ‘known truths’ about teaching and learning. In this vein, this study provided an insight into how collaboration practices were discursively constructed within a situated context. The theoretical framework used in this study elucidated the complexities and problems of ‘building’ mutual and equitable partnership in school–university collaboration. Critical discourse analysis provided a research approach to examine critically the problematic and highly complex relationship between language and social practice. In tracing the practice of collaboration as discursive event, I was able to examine the way power has infused itself within the discourses and practices of teacher education circulating in the Hong Kong context. In this study, we can see how a practice is ‘normalised’ through discourse and linked to the social and political motivations shaping collaboration practices. The study thus shows how critical discourse analysis in educational research has the potential to problematise the taken for granted assumptions about school–university collaboration.

The study also has implications for professional practice in other educational settings because it offers a critique of dominant educational practices circulating in the broader social context. It allows us to challenge naturalised assumptions about ‘best practices’ in teacher learning by using critical discourse analysis to identify how collaboration ideology is distributed and reproduced through discourse. Analysing the process of naturalisation in text, we can begin to understand how ideologies about teacher learning are embedded in discursive practices. This type of meta-research is not an abstract activity, but has practical and significant consequences in exposing and contesting practices, such as collaboration, that are privileged in educational discourse.

There are, of course, limitations in the study. The case study was limited to the collaboration practices between the facilitators and one school and I was only able to examine the practice of collaborative action research between schools and universities. It would be useful to examine the discursive practice of collaboration in different educational contexts to further problematise the notion of professional

collaboration. For example, a longitudinal critical discourse analysis study examining the discursive construction of collegial collaboration and collaboration between teachers and students working together in schools in the context of curriculum reform would offer further insights into how other collaboration practices are enacted in different institutional and sociocultural contexts.

Another limitation in the study was the dual roles I played in the case study. I was aware that my roles as a researcher and participant in the case study may have influenced the way I interpreted the data. Furthermore, my role as a member of the university team may have influenced how the teachers and my colleagues responded to my questions in the follow-up interviews. As I have already discussed in Chap. 3, it is important in qualitative research for the researcher to reflect and acknowledge how his/her position can influence the findings of the research (Merriam 1998). After analysis of the data, I sent a summary of the key findings to the teachers and the members of the CAR project team for them to verify the analysis and my interpretation of the texts. This process of member checking was important in addressing the issue of reliability in the analysis of the data and the trustworthiness of the findings. I also acknowledge that in conducting qualitative research, I am representing and reproducing knowledge at the same time (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002), thus all data are forms of social construction. In acting as a participant-researcher, I am aware that I bring into the research my own cultural and ideological baggage which may influence the findings and conclusions. However, as Holliday (2002) argues, this is inevitable in conducting qualitative research, but can be addressed through a process of systematic reflection by the researcher. In this study, I have tried to address this limitation by acknowledging my own subjectivity in the research process and by critically reflecting on how I position myself and 'others' in the presentation of the data (Holliday 2002; Richardson 1994; Shacklock and Smyth 1998). I acknowledge that much of what I see as the researcher is a result of my own presence and familiarity with the social world (Holliday 2002). As I have made explicit in Chaps. 1 and 2, the focus of this study was not to be critical of the teachers and facilitators, rather it was to examine collaborative action research as a social practice in the context of curriculum reform in Hong Kong. The findings of this study do not claim to offer 'solutions' for collaboration, but offer a critical understanding of the problems and why particular practices of collaboration are privileged over others in the current social context.

Concluding Remarks

This book has been an awareness raising activity and has helped me further understand why collaboration is difficult to achieve in the Hong Kong sociocultural context. It has also illuminated the practical implications of facilitating school–university collaboration to support teachers in the context of curriculum reform. In

recent years, Hong Kong's neighbouring countries and regions such as Mainland China, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, Korea and Brunei have also been undergoing major curriculum reforms (Cheng et al. 2004). School–University collaboration is also prominent in professional development discourse in these countries. I would recommend more critical studies to investigate how collaboration functions in other Asian contexts. This would be useful in building up a deeper understanding of how collaboration operates in non-Western sociocultural contexts. Critical discourse analysis can be employed to complement different approaches to educational research such as naturalistic and ethnographic research, historical and documentary research and longitudinal case studies.

In conclusion, I suggest that critical research into educational practices is crucial in providing a much needed space for researchers to interrogate how particular ideologies and views about teaching and learning are presented in discourse as a way to 'interrupt' the "flat pronouncements of commonsense" (MacLure 2003, p 79). Simons et al. (2009, p. 82) provide the following working definition of criticality in the context of education research: "the attitude that involves an act of rereading resulting in an act de-familiarization, and opening up a space for new thought or action in between past and future". Examining collaboration through a critical lens can help us understand how it is enacted and why collaboration is difficult to achieve in an educational setting. Critical research provides an approach to question our naturalised assumptions about perceived best practices for teacher education. This understanding facilitates exploration for alternative practices for school–university collaboration. The discussions in the book thus have key implications for professional practice.

The existence in our era of a discourse in which collaboration is presented as a gold standard for teachers to do professional development, including the proclamation of empowerment, the promise of transformation and social justice for the teaching profession, has given the term currency. The core issue of this study was not to examine if educators should or should not collaborate, but to discover who does the speaking and what viewpoints are privileged when collaboration is constructed in an educational setting. This study examined the discursive events to trace how collaboration is construed in discourse in teacher education. It facilitated a much needed critical examination and discussion of the links between how school–university collaboration is presented in a contemporary educational context. The case study also enabled me to reflect on my own practice as a CAR facilitator and to consider how I might position myself as a collaborator in future projects with Hong Kong schools. Through the process of problematising my own construction of collaboration in the CAR project, the study has highlighted the complexities of setting up democratic relations with teachers. It has also highlighted the tensions and complexities in initiating and maintaining the tropes of collaboration including the issues of equity, mutuality and empowerment. The study helped me challenge my own comfortable assumptions about professional development practices which are presented as being 'good' for teachers and to problematise these practices more critically in these times of increasing regulation and bureaucratic management of teacher education.

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