



Review article

Partnerships as third spaces for professional practice in initial teacher education: A scoping review

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Thirty-six studies were identified between 2010 and 2019 across seven countries.
- The third space is linked to identity and epistemology negotiations.
- The third space affords less hierarchical models for professional practice.
- The third space offers an alternative to the theory–practice dichotomy.
- Several challenges emerge in the third space.

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ABSTRACT

This article comprises a scoping review of partnerships as third spaces for professional practice (2010–2019). The purpose of this review is to provide a comprehensive overview of relevant research regarding the emergence of the concept “third space” in professional practice in teacher education. The review is underpinned by the five-stage framework of Arksey and O’Malley (2005). The results show that participants’ identities in the third space are in constant negotiation as a result of crossing boundaries and performing hybrid roles. The symmetrical interconnection of knowledge in the third space contributes to a fundamental shift in the focus on whose expertise counts in the education of future teachers. © 2021 The Author(s). Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

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1. Introduction

Initial teacher education (ITE) is increasingly relying on partnerships to improve professional practice and to strengthen the link between university-based and school-based knowledge about teaching. The “third space”—a concept borrowed from the post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha (1994) and introduced to professional practice in teacher education by the American scholar Kenneth Zeichner (2010)—has permeated research on ITE over the last decade. The intent is to establish less hierarchical spaces where universities, schools, and dominant discourses converge. The third space favors a participatory approach to professional practice in which teacher educators (TEs), pre-service teachers (PSTs), and local communities collaborate and co-construct knowledge about teaching.

The third space has recently become the focus of a growing body of research that has shed light on professional practice in ITE, underscoring the significance of hybrid spaces of practice where knowledge communities meet. Despite this research trend, several dilemmas remain. There is little agreement about how to operationalize the rather vague and utopian concept of the third space in professional practice, and there is still a lack of insight into how partnerships can address the challenges that arise from its implementation. As research advocates for an expansion of the use of the third space as a model for school–university partnerships in ITE, an extensive overview of the literature is necessary. This scoping review meets this need by providing a navigation map of how the concept of the third space has permeated the teacher education landscape in recent years.

In this scoping review, we explore how the academic literature has conceptualized the third space as a model for professional practice in ITE from 2010 to 2019. Teacher education programs are found in universities, colleges, and other postsecondary schools; for the sake of clarity, we decided to use the term “university” throughout the text. In the following, we will first introduce key theoretical and empirical research on school–university partnerships in ITE and on the third space. Second, we briefly explain the choice of a scoping review to address our research aims and present the methodological procedures followed to choose the literature. Next, we offer a descriptive and substantive overview of the findings, followed by a discussion of the studies chosen for this scoping review.

1.1. Professional practice and the intersection of epistemic communities

Professional practice in ITE is embedded in the intersection of different epistemic communities in schools, universities, and local communities where PSTs will later develop their teaching professions. For decades, scholarly discussions have criticized teacher education because of the predominance of academic knowledge over practice-based knowledge. This criticism, often referred to as the theory–practice divide, is most notably present in the work of Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999), Cochran-Smith (2004), Darling-Hammond et al. (2005), Darling-Hammond (2006), Korthagen

(2010), and Southgate et al. (2013).

Recently, more dialogue and collaborative research have occurred between scholars, practitioners, and policymakers on how to increase coherence and cooperation for professional practice in ITE. Some examples of these efforts are the redefinition of professional practice and the development of a learning community model (Le Cornu, 2010; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008); the fostering of PSTs’ resilience within learning community models (Le Cornu, 2009); the implementation of long-term partnerships (Peters, 2011); enhancing program coherence, authentic workplace learning, and collaborative partnerships (Allen & Wright, 2014; Canrinus et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2014; Morrison, 2016); and implementing models to promote teacher capacity for mentoring in professional practice (Betlem et al., 2018).

Contemporary research on professional practice in ITE focuses on the design and implementation of school–university partnerships that connect different epistemic communities from schools, universities (Allen et al., 2013, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Gravet et al., 2019; Postholm, 2016), and local communities (Darling-Hammond & Leiberman, 2012; Jones et al., 2016; Zeichner, 2012). However, balancing school-based and university-based knowledge about teaching and learning challenges the sustainability and effectiveness of partnerships, which subsequently affects the professional practice knowledge of PSTs.

Partnerships appear quite complex, as all the participants meet in the intersection of different knowledge communities and their experiences as teachers and learners. According to Lillejord and Børte (2016), partnerships are complex enterprises that require cross-institutional resources, infrastructure, and knowledge sharing to truly support professional learning. Lemon et al. (2015) found that the design, implementation, and replication of partnerships in ITE are not linear; rather, partnerships are layered and require open and constant dialogue from all participants involved. Similarly, Allen and Wright (2014) found that PSTs stress the need for transparent communication between stakeholders and that coursework assessment should be included in the practice period to increase the opportunities to link theory and practice (p. 149).

In investigating university-based teacher educators’ (UBTEs) beliefs about the purpose of professional practice, Morrison (2016) found that UBTEs highlight the relevance of professional practice in the education of future teachers. For these UBTEs, successful practice experiences for the PSTs involve close collaboration with school-based teacher educators. However, the complexity of interactions during practice is also apparent in the participants’ beliefs, especially challenges associated with performing—and often reshaping—the role of the teacher. Such issues raise several concerns about how to best improve the design of school–university partnerships in ITE, considering the needs of PSTs and teacher educators. For instance, Gravet et al. (2019) examined a teacher education program design that emphasizes professional practice knowledge. This design includes four aspects—attention to the curriculum, organizational structures, teacher education pedagogy, and program identity—integrated in a close collaboration and co-construction with partner schools. The authors’ findings suggest positive outcomes of close cooperation in partnerships, reinforcing

the benefits of fostering hybrid, less hierarchical, relations between schools and universities.

Integrating theory and practice as two different but equally important sources of knowledge is crucial in designing school–university partnerships. Working collaboratively in partnerships requires participants to cross institutional boundaries and promote horizontal forms of knowledge rather than the vertical forms that have long prioritized academic expertise (Zeichner, 2012; Zeichner & Payne, 2013). Contemporary research, particularly that surfacing from 2010 to the present (Le Cornu, 2016), is increasingly highlighting the need for teacher educators, based in schools and universities, to work together in third spaces that provide PSTs with integrated forms of knowledge and expertise about the teaching profession.

Therefore, scholars and practitioners worldwide have adopted the third space as a model that can potentially blur boundaries and even out hierarchies in school–university partnerships. ITE programs that include the third space in their design are expected to establish partnerships that collaboratively integrate theory and practice. However, scholars such as Lillejord and Børte (2016) highlight the use—and possible “misuse”—of the third space, as it may result in greater contradictions and challenges in implementing partnerships. Bruna (2009) also emphasized concerns about the overuse of the third space in education. For Bruna (2009, p. 221), hybridity and the “third space fetish” are distortions of Bhabha’s critical and liberatory theory of identity. Bruna’s main criticism is that the third space in education has become something teachers or other participants need to achieve rather than an already existing space, which re-centers the focus on the dominant discourses Bhabha aimed to challenge.

As current educational policies worldwide highlight the need to establish closer cooperation in professional practice between ITE programs and schools, the popularity of the third space as a partnership model, however contested, is high. This necessitates greater attention. Next, we briefly explore the concept of the third space, from its origins in post-colonial theory to its adoption in education, specifically in professional practice in ITE.

1.2. The third space

The concept of the third space originates from the essay compendium *The Location of Culture* from post-colonial academic Homi Bhabha (1994). In this work, Bhabha challenges us to think of our identities as flexible and not fixed. What Bhabha proposes is that our identities are hybrids, destabilizing the perceived binaries around us. For Bhabha (1994), hybridity is the notion that ideas and knowledge are present and derive from the different cultures with which we have had contact. Consequently, we are all in between cultures, and our identities are hybrids, demonstrating characteristics of all the cultures we are familiar with. The third space is rooted in our human condition and is part of human liberation (Bhabha, 1994). The third space is thus an analogy that critically challenges binaries, such as colonizers and colonized, opening a third way to understand and enact our identities.

The third space concept has been adopted by many disciplines, from architecture to the social sciences to education. For the political geographer Edward Soja (1996), the third space represents hybridity as “othering,” moving away from the duality of the third space as a tangible material and using it as a way to understand how imaginary spaces intersect and blend. Soja (1996) understands the third space as created in binary relationships that have elements from two opposing categories, creating the alternative of an “other” identity. In this view, opposing knowledge can be intentionally assembled and blended to create an “an-other” hybrid alternative.

In education, Kristi Gutierrez has used the concept to refer to the hybridity of knowledge and literacy and to think about the interactions of students in their home, social, and school life. In their analysis of everyday classroom activity and discourse, Gutierrez et al. (1995) and Gutierrez (2008) stated that teachers and students are both agents in challenging the power structures of dominant discourses. They do so when communicating from third scripts that belong neither to the official nor the unofficial discourse. Thus, the third space is an improvised dialogical exchange that occurs in the classroom and challenges the hegemonic dynamics of society.

For Gutierrez et al. (1995), students learn in a familiar yet overlapping context that rapidly shifts. In doing so, students need to break the boundaries between the home and school, combine their total lived experience, and view school as the third space. Gutierrez argues that only by fostering this third space can the full development of the student be supported.

American scholar Kenneth Zeichner (2010) introduced the third space to professional practice in ITE as a metaphor denoting the merging point where schools, universities, and local communities come together. In this view of the third space, PSTs, TEs based in schools and universities, and local communities work *together* rather than *with* each other to improve professional practice in ITE. Zeichner (2010) acknowledges that individuals’ discourses overlap and intersect in hybrid spaces, where tensions occur as knowledge communities and expertise clash.

Zeichner’s (2010) introduction of hybridity and the third space into professional practice advocates for less hierarchical relationships among participants in partnerships and a continuous shift in the epistemology of professional practice in ITE. The third space opens the possibility to theorize tensions in partnerships and to foster horizontal forms of knowledge and expertise that participants come to negotiate in practice. Understood from different angles, the third space is the arena in which meaningful interaction occurs to enrich one another’s experiences, which, in the case of partnerships in ITE, can lead to the creation of new ideas for understanding and enacting professional practice. In this literature review, we intend to look deeper into how contemporary research on ITE has conceptualized the third space in partnerships and professional practice.

2. Methods

Scoping reviews are increasingly used to summarize the available evidence in a given field, particularly medicine, educational research, and policy-making. They are useful for mapping the breadth and depth of a field in the literature that might not be comprehensively reviewed yet (Levac et al., 2010). Scoping reviews are also used to inform policymakers and to determine whether a full systematic review is required (Grant & Booth, 2009). Unlike systematic reviews, scoping reviews do not aim to assess the quality of the studies included. Rather, they aim to address broader questions that reveal the robust “scope” of a field (Peterson et al., 2017). However, scoping reviews also follow systematic, transparent, and replicable procedures (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005).

Considering these characteristics, we chose to use a scoping review because it allows us to unravel the vagueness of the third space concept and to provide a summarized overview of how contemporary literature has used the third space vis-à-vis professional practice in ITE.

The methodological approach for this scoping review draws on the five-step framework initially developed by Arksey and O’Malley (2005) and later enhanced by Levac et al. (2010) as well as on Peters et al.’s (2015) guidelines for conducting scoping reviews. The five steps in Arksey and O’Malley’s framework are (i) identifying the

research question(s); (ii) identifying relevant studies; (iii) study selection; (iv) charting the data; and (v) collating, summarizing, and reporting the results.

Before starting the literature search for this scoping review, we needed to establish a starting point and to corroborate whether there were other literature reviews on partnerships as third spaces in ITE. In this initial search, we found no scoping reviews conducted up to August 2019 or research studies conducted before Zeichner's influential 2010 study.

2.1. Literature search strategy

Following Arksey and O'Malley (2005), we posed the following research question to guide the search:

- i) How has the academic literature conceptualized the third space of professional practice in ITE from 2010 to 2019?

Based on the keywords identified during the initial search and previous reading, we identified four main concepts to explore: teacher education, professional practice, partnership, and third space. We also used the thesaurus feature of the Education Research Complete (EBSCO) database to expand the terminology, including alternative synonyms for the main concepts (see Appendix 1). Further, we consulted a librarian specializing in the field of education to refine the keywords and identify the best databases to use.

We searched six databases for articles and book chapters written in English: Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, EBSCO, International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS), and Google Scholar. To exhaust all possible sources, we also searched online versions of Taylor & Francis and SAGE journals. As no new studies emerged, we chose not to search other online journals. We searched two databases for studies written in Norwegian: Idunn and Google Scholar. The search techniques included the use of Boolean operators to connect, widen, and/or narrow the keywords/phrases.

We broadened the scope of the review using a backward snowballing search of the most relevant and recent studies that surfaced. The literature search was conducted in the spring and summer (May–August) of 2019. The search attributes were set to ensure that the searches retrieved only peer-reviewed articles or book chapters published between January 1, 2010 and August 31, 2019 written in English or Norwegian. A detailed protocol (a document detailing the search procedures systematically) was developed to pre-define the objectives and methods of the scoping review and to keep records of each literature search.

We chose to include literature written in Norwegian because we considered that examining the Norwegian perspective could add some local societal flavor to the otherwise more conceptual framing of the third space. To improve the quality of teacher education in Norway, the Ministry of Education (2017) implemented a strategy that focuses, among other goals, on establishing stronger, more equal, and less hierarchical partnerships by 2025. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has commissioned two reports on partnerships for quality in teacher education, in which the third space is considered an important arena to develop solid cooperation in partnerships (Ministry of Education, 2019, 2020). Thus, by exploring the Norwegian context, we aim to show how the concept of the third space moves beyond conceptualization into policies and practices that can further improve the quality of partnerships in teacher education.

2.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The starting point of our literature search was Zeichner's (2010)

influential study that specifically introduced the third space into professional practice in ITE. Research before this time, as proved by our initial search, is unlikely to reflect the specific use of the concept in connection to ITE and professional practice. Therefore, we considered the period from 2010 to August 2019 appropriate. To narrow the focus of our search and select only relevant articles or book chapters, the following delimitations applied (Table 1).

2.3. Charting the results

The search processes in Norwegian and English yielded the following results. From the database search, we identified 204 studies, and the manual search of bibliographies revealed 12 more. We continued the manual search procedures until a saturation point was reached and no other studies were identified (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The total amount of studies found was 216, of which 84 were duplicates. Subsequently, we manually screened the titles and abstracts of the remaining 132 studies. Thus, we removed 67 studies using the exclusion criteria. We later extracted information from the 65 remaining studies, including the locations, objectives, methods, research questions, and main findings.

Upon completing the data extraction, we appraised the title, abstract, findings, and conclusions of each of the 65 studies. We ranked the studies on a scale from 1 to 3. Studies that were highly relevant to our review were ranked 3, those that were moderately relevant (meaning we doubted their relevance) were ranked 2, and those we considered of little relevance were ranked 1 and were discarded. As we needed to determine whether the studies ranked 2 would be included, we independently reviewed each study again and met to decide which would be included and which would be discarded. The final scoping review included 36 studies. Fig. 1 shows an overview of this review process.

2.4. Data analysis

We began the data analysis with a full-text reading of each of the 36 studies by at least two of the researchers. We later entered the details into an Excel file, including the authors' names, journals/books, location, sample size, and methods. We coded, classified, and summarized the information obtained during the data charting using tables and figures. This resulted in a comprehensive overview of the main characteristics of each study and enabled a basic cross-study comparison. Our initial synthesis method included developing descriptive codes that were later clustered in primary themes that emerged from the data. The researchers revised and redefined these preliminary themes into the final set of themes.

2.5. Limitations

The focus of this scoping review is limited. The literature search only considered peer-reviewed articles or book chapters written in English or Norwegian published from 2010 to 2019. The choice of keywords used or omitted and the databases and online journals used for the literature search may have had an impact on the findings, although we took several steps to minimize potential impacts. For instance, we conducted trial searches in other databases with a few other keywords to corroborate that no other new results surfaced. We consulted a librarian specializing in the educational field who pointed out the most relevant databases and discussed the comprehensiveness of the keywords used, which suggested that a level of saturation had been reached. While the 36 studies included were conducted in different countries, the majority emanated from the US, the UK, and Australia.

Table 1
Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Time	2010–2019	Articles or book chapters outside these dates.
Language	English and Norwegian	Non-English and non-Norwegian articles or book chapters.
Type of article	Articles published in peer-reviewed journals and book chapters published in edited books.	Articles and book chapters that were not peer reviewed.
Topic focus	Partnerships as third spaces for professional practice in ITE. Professional practice in ITE where the third space is utilized. Studies where the third space is examined, used, and explored in regard to professional practice in ITE.	Studies that explore the third space in any other educational context, such as, literacy, language learning, pupil–teacher interaction, indigenous education, vocational studies, adult education, etc. Studies that only make a brief reference to the third space for professional practice in ITE.
Population and sample	Pre-service teachers and teacher educators at universities and schools involved in the professional practice components of ITE.	Professional practice in all other disciplines outside of teacher education. Professional practice in ITE that does not explore/use the third space.

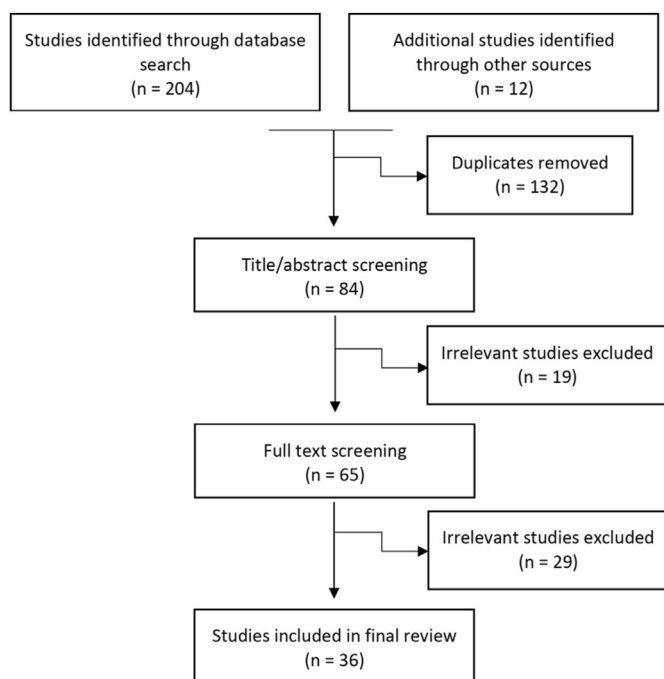


Fig. 1. Scoping review search strategy.

3. Results

In line with the intent of a scoping review, we provide a brief descriptive overview of the studies. In section 3.2, we present a substantive overview of the studies about the conceptualization of the third space in professional practice in ITE.

3.1. Descriptive overview

- Country of origin. The research reported in the selected studies was conducted in seven countries. The US leads with 16 studies, followed by Australia with seven (one of which is a comparative analysis of three countries, Australia, the Netherlands, and the UK), Norway with five, the UK with five, and Denmark, New Zealand, and South Africa with one each.
- Year of publication. Across the time period 2010–2019, nine studies were published in 2018, six in 2016, and four in 2017. The greater number of studies in the second half of the decade indicate increased interest in this area of research in teacher education.

- Journals/books. Of the 36 studies included, 34 were published in 23 peer-reviewed journals. The *Journal of Teacher Education* contained six articles, followed by the *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* with three. Two of the studies included are book chapters.
- Methodology. Qualitative methods were used in all 36 studies. Case studies and auto-ethnography are among the most used research designs. However, there are also narrative research and phenomenological designs.
- Participants. The perspectives of university- and school-based teacher educators (UBTEs and SBTEs)—and sometimes PSTs—are represented across all the studies. The participants are referred to in the studies as mentors, tutors, university staff, teacher candidates, etc. For the sake of clarity, we chose to use UBTEs, SBTEs, and PSTs. Community knowledge and involvement are included in six of the studies, and school administration is included in two. Furthermore, the use of information and communication technology tools to foster the third space is examined in four studies.

3.2. Substantive overview

From our data analysis, we identified two main themes related to the conceptualization of the third space: negotiating identity and the intersection of epistemologies. Although we try to draw clear lines between these themes, it is relevant to note that there are gray zones where the studies often overlap in the way they use, make sense of, and operationalize the third space. This overlap is especially present across the sub-themes. Table 2 summarizes the themes that emerged from our analysis. Table 3 presents an overview of the studies and the emerging themes.

3.2.1. Negotiating identities

In 18 of the 36 studies, the negotiation of identities is a key component of the third space in professional practice. Typically, these studies explore how the participants in partnerships—PSTs, TEs based in schools and universities, and administrative staff—cross institutional boundaries, collaborate across contexts, adopt hybrid roles, and rethink their identities in the third space. Nine of the studies explore the relationship between crossing institutional boundaries and negotiating identities. Furthermore, nine additional studies relate performing hybrid roles with negotiating identities. Four of the studies include both sub-themes.

The literature shows that crossing boundaries and adopting hybrid roles are inherent in the third space of professional practice and directly influence identity negotiations. The participants who move across contexts in the third space are bound to cross not only the boundaries of institutions but also the boundaries of their

Table 2
Overview of thematic synthesis.

Themes for RQ1. How has the academic literature conceptualized the third space of professional practice in ITE from 2010 to 2019?		
Theme	Sub-themes	Studies
1. Negotiating identities	a. Crossing boundaries b. Performing hybrid roles	9 13 (*4)
2. The intersection of epistemologies	a. Towards new pedagogical possibilities b. A digital third space c. Interconnecting knowledge sources	23 (*18) 4 (*4) 19 (*13)

*Number of studies that overlap sub-themes

professions across settings, thus adopting different hybrid roles in school–university partnerships.

3.2.1.1. Crossing boundaries. Some researchers have found that crossing boundaries as a result of working collaboratively in the third space has direct implications for the participants' identities. Participants collectively navigate the third space of professional practice together, crossing the boundaries of schools, universities, and indeed, as [Zeichner \(2010\)](#) argues, of local communities. While crossing these boundaries, UBTEs, SBTEs, and PSTs are encouraged to negotiate their identities as hybrid TEs, PSTs, and community members. In the following, we will use examples from the literature to illustrate these conceptual connections and explore how the authors see boundary crossings as crucial activities for negotiating identity in the third space.

Crossing boundaries in hybrid spaces can include bringing experienced teachers from schools to university courses and vice versa, where TEs cross the boundaries between schools, universities, and local communities, merging knowledge from different sources ([Zeichner, 2010](#); [Zeichner et al., 2015](#)). Notably, [Zeichner \(2010\)](#) and [Zeichner et al. \(2015\)](#) highlight the crucial role that communities play in the construction of the third space in partnerships.

Communities become both a new actor and an arena in which participants constantly cross institutional boundaries and adopt hybrid roles. Crossing boundaries beyond school and university classrooms is thus an opportunity for PSTs to acquire important contextual knowledge that contributes to the formation of their teacher identities. According to [Zeichner et al. \(2015\)](#), the collaborative nature of the third space in partnerships affords the required flexibility for participants to cross boundaries and rethink their professional identities while adapting to new ways of learning and acquiring knowledge.

Other studies have also conceptualized the third space as an arena where boundary crossing occurs and, as a result, professional and personal identities are constantly re-negotiated ([Martin et al., 2011](#); [Williams, 2013, 2014, p. 2014](#); [Williams et al., 2018](#)). Opportunities to cross institutional boundaries and to rethink professional identities can arise in retreat sessions ([Williams et al., 2018](#)) or in activities where UBTEs who cross professional boundaries redefine their identities as both schoolteachers on one hand and as UBTEs on the other ([Williams, 2014](#)).

[Martin et al. \(2011\)](#) further analyze the boundary crossing of UBTEs. The authors use the term “liaisons” in referring to UBTEs who become the link between the university and the partner schools. In crossing institutional boundaries from universities to schools, UBTEs become liaisons who not only serve as ambassadors to the schools but are also guides, trouble-shooters, counselors, negotiators, and consultants. Thus, liaisons negotiate their identities and adopt hybrid roles in the third space as a consequence of crossing boundaries.

For [Jackson and Burch \(2019\)](#), UBTEs are “boundary brokers.” Boundary brokering in the third space has the potential to redefine

the roles of SBTEs and UBTEs in professional practice. [Jackson and Burch \(2019\)](#) view the third space as an arena that facilitates the work of boundary brokers, allowing them to explore and confront the complexities of the teaching profession and support, together with SBTEs, the process of teaching others to teach.

The boundary brokers in the third space play a paradoxical role in promoting a sense of safety and security in partnerships while challenging potentially long-held assumptions of what teaching is and how best to conduct its practice ([Jackson & Burch, 2016, 2019](#)). SBTEs in the third space of professional practice are also required to cross institutional and professional boundaries ([Forgasz et al., 2018](#); [Luthen & Kolstad, 2018](#); [Taylor et al., 2014](#)).

Schoolteachers who, in their primary roles as teachers, have been agents of change cross boundaries in the third space and become SBTEs. Thus, their identities shift, as they also become agents of change when teaching others to teach ([Taylor et al., 2014](#)). Crossing boundaries is also relevant for PSTs ([Martin et al., 2011](#); [Williams, 2013](#)). There is transformative potential in crossing boundaries in the third space, as UBTEs mediate and contribute to PSTs' experiences in partnership contexts ([Martin et al., 2011](#)). Hence, TEs based in schools and universities assume hybrid roles when working in tandem to scaffold and guide PSTs, which causes them to rethink their professional identities. Such work leads to a collective third space in which both individual participants and the collective develop into a new community of practice.

Boundary crossers are encouraged to reconsider their assumptions and look beyond the known and familiar ([Jackson & Burch, 2019](#); [Klein et al., 2013](#)). However, coming together in the third space does not automatically imply progress and new insights ([Martin et al., 2011](#)). Developing partnerships in the third space requires an enhanced and deeper interpretation of *working together* rather than *working with* ([Taylor et al., 2014, p. 16](#)). In this process of crossing boundaries back and forth, as we have examined in this section, all participants rethink their identities as TEs, learners, agents of change, boundary brokers, and guides. The participants in the third space also adopt hybrid roles.

3.2.1.2. Performing hybrid roles. As stated above, the participants in the third space constantly cross professional and institutional boundaries, which encourages them to negotiate their identities. In this section, our focus is on the overlapping sub-theme of performing hybrid roles.

Using an urban teacher residency program as an example, [Klein et al. \(2016\)](#) found that PSTs in the third space re-negotiate their identities as recipients of knowledge to become agents who solve problems and mediate and facilitate learning as active learners in their process of becoming teachers. Thus, PSTs in the third space become “co-teachers and co-learners” (p. 246). The participants in the third space experience a constant shifting of their roles, adopting and adapting the various perspectives from the ones learning to teach, the ones with the practice experience at schools, and the ones with research experience at university ([Casale & Thomas, 2018](#); [Cuenca et al., 2011](#); [Forgasz et al., 2018](#); [Grudnoff](#)

Table 3
Overview of studies and emerging themes.

N	Author (s)	Title	Journal	Context	Data sources	Participants	Negotiating identities		The intersection of epistemologies		
							Crossing boundaries	Performing Hybrid roles	New pedagogical possibilities	A digital third space	Interconnecting knowledge sources
1	Zeichner (2010)	Rethinking the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college- and university-based teacher education	Journal of Teacher Education	USA	*	*	•	•	•		•
2	Cuenca et al. (2011)	Creating a “third space” in student teaching: Implications for the university supervisor's status as outsider	Teaching and teacher education	USA	Discussions (breakout sessions)	9 Teacher educators (graduate students and faculty staff)		•			
3	Mutemeri and Chetty (2011)	An examination of university-school partnerships in South Africa	South African Journal of Education	SA	Interviews Focus groups	26 Lecturers 61 student-teachers			•		•
4	Martin, Snow & Franklin Torrez (2011)	Navigating the terrain of third space: Tensions with/in relationships in school-university partnerships	Journal of Teacher Education	USA	Self-reflections Group conversations Descriptive memos	Self-study	•				•
5	Lewis (2012)	Locating the third space in Initial Teacher Training	Research in teacher education	UK	Discussions and reflections (Wiki)	Student teachers			•	•	
6	Ikpeze et al. (2012)	PDS Collaboration as Third Space: An analysis of the quality of learning experiences in a PDS partnership	Studying Teacher Education	USA	Coversations Written reflections Online surveys Interviews	Collaborative self-study 9 Faculty members 21 school-based educators 66 pre-service teachers			•		•
7	Williams (2013)	Boundary Crossing and Working in the Third Space: Implications for a teacher educator's identity and practice	Studying Teacher Education	AU	Reflective e-journal E-mail conversations	Self-study 2 pre-service teachers	•	•			
8	Klein et al. (2013)	Finding a third space in teacher education: creating an urban teacher residency	The New Educator	USA	Interviews Meeting notes Artifacts (curriculum, faculty responses, digital stories)	Reflective program descriptions based on a longitudinal study in which all stakeholders were engaged. School faculty University faculty Residents		•			
9	Williams (2014)	Teacher Educator Professional Learning in the Third Space: Implications for Identity and Practice	Journal of Teacher Education	AU NL UK	Interviews	18 teacher educators (university-based)	•				
10	McDonough (2014)	Rewriting the Script of Mentoring Pre-Service Teachers in Third Space: Exploring Tensions of Loyalty, Obligation and Advocacy	Studying Teacher Education	Australia	Fieldnotes in journal Reflective narratives E-mails	Self-study			•		•
11	Taylor et al. (2014)	Tensions of Reimagining Our Roles as Teacher Educators in a Third Space: Revisiting a Co/autoethnography Through a Faculty Lens	Studying Teacher Education	USA	Personal narratives Field notes	Self-study	•	•			
12	Youens et al. (2014)	Promoting collaborative practice and reciprocity in initial teacher education: Realising a 'dialogic space' through video capture analysis	Journal of Education for Teaching	UK	Video capture Questionnaires Conversations	2 Student teachers 1 University tutor 1 Mentor teacher			•	•	
13				USA					•		

(continued on next page)

Table 3 (continued)

N	Author (s)	Title	Journal	Context	Data sources	Participants	Negotiating identities		The intersection of epistemologies		
							Crossing boundaries	Performing Hybrid roles	New pedagogical possibilities	A digital third space	Interconnecting knowledge sources
	Wood & Turner (2015)	Bringing the Teacher into Teacher Preparation: Learning from Mentor Teachers in Joint Methods Activities	Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education		Videos of group interaction	11 Pre-service teachers 29 Mentor teachers					
14	Zeichner, Pyne & Brayko (2015)	Democratizing Teacher Education	Journal of Teacher Education	USA	*	*	•				•
15	Laursen (2015)	The theory-practice divide: The case of Denmark	Advances in Research on Teaching. Book series	DK	Observations Interviews	Student teachers Lecturers 2 Administrative staff			•		
16	Skotheim et al. (2016)	En lærendepraksistrekant	Scandinavian Journal of Vocations in Development	NO	Interviews Focus group	6 Student teachers			•		•
17	Klein et al. (2016)	Exploring Inquiry in the Third Space: Case Studies of a Year in an Urban Teacher-Residency Program	Teaching Education	USA	Observations Interviews Field notes Reflections *	2 Residents	•	•			
18	Miles et al. (2016)	The recursive practice of research and teaching: reframing teacher education	Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education	AU		*			•		
19	Sawyer et al. (2016)	At the Crossroads of Clinical Practice and Teacher Leadership: A Changing Paradigm for Professional Practice	International Journal of Teacher Leadership	USA	Surveys Interviews	2 Clinical faculty members 15 Teacher preparation candidates			•		•
20	Smith (2016)	Partnerships in teacher education – Going beyond the rhetoric, with reference to the Norwegian context	Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal	NO	*	*					•
21	Jackson and Burch (2016)	School Direct, a policy for initial teacher training in England: plotting a principled pedagogical path through a changing landscape	Professional Development in Education	UK	*	*			•	•	•
22	Lejonberg, Elstad & Hunskaar (2017)	Behov for å utvikle « det tredje rom » i relasjonen mellom universitet og praksisskoler	Uniped	NO	*	*			•		
23	Steele (2017)	An alternative collaborative supervision practice between university-based teachers and school-based teachers	Issues in Educational Research	NO	Research log Voice-records of seminars and meetings Interviews	8 Student teachers 3 School-based teachers 2 University-based teachers			•	•	•
24	Grudnoff et al. (2017)	Re-envisioning and reinvigorating school–university practicum partnerships	Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education	NZ		4 Principals 4 Adjunct lecturer 30 Mentor teachers 30 Student teachers 4 University faculty			•	•	
25	Howell et al. (2017)	Backchannel discussions during classroom observations: Connecting theory and practice in real time	Middle School Journal	USA	Online backchannel discussions Focus groups Field notes Conversations Reflections Interviews	Pre-service teachers			•	•	
26	Fitchett et al. (2018)	Building Program Coherence and the (Un)intentional Clinical Experiences for First-Semester Preservice Teachers	Action in Teacher Education	USA		13 pre-service teachers			•		•
27	Forgasz et al. (2018)	Theorising the Third Space of Professional Experience Partnerships	Book Chapter	AU	*	*			•		•
28	Watters, Diezman & Dao (2018)	Using classroom videos to stimulate professional conversations among pre-service teachers: windows into a mathematics classroom	Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education	AU	Observation protocols Focus discussion (Classroom videos)	71 pre-service teachers			•	•	

29	Luthen and Kolstad (2018)	Veiledning i lærerstudenters praksisopplæring - et bidrag til læring og utvikling?	Nordisk tidsskrift i veiledningspedagogikk	NO	Letters	19 School mentors 21 Student teachers	•	•	•
30	Beck (2018)	Investigating the Third Space: A New Agenda for Teacher Education Research	Journal of Teacher Education	USA	*	*		•	•
31	Williams et al. (2018)	Stories from the third space: Teacher educators' professional learning in a school/university partnership	Book Chapter	AU	Narratives	The authors as teacher educators	•	•	
32	Passy et al. (2018)	Building learning partnerships between schools and universities: an example from south-west England	Journal of Education for Teaching	UK	Survey Interviews	University-based Researchers- in-Residence Partner teacher/senior leader			•
33	Casale and Thomas (2018)	Interactive co-teaching strategies: developing effective partnerships	On the Horizon	USA	Artifacts (lessons, assignments, notes) Conversations	University-based teacher Education faculty School teachers	•		
34	Lee (2018)	Breaking Down Barriers and Building Bridges: Transformative Practices in Community- and School-Based Urban Teacher Preparation	Journal of Teacher Education	USA	*	*		•	•
35	Jackson and Burch (2019)	New directions for teacher education: investigating school/university partnership in an increasingly school-based context	Professional Development in Education	UK	Non-participant observation Interviews	5 School-based teacher educators	•	•	•
36	Souto-Manning and Martell (2019)	Toward Critically Transformative Possibilities: Considering Tensions and Undoing Inequities in the Spatialization of Teacher Education	Teachers College Record	USA	Critical dialogue Artifacts	The authors as 1 Universty-based teacher educator 1 School-based teacher educator		•	•

et al., 2017; Sawyer et al., 2016; Steele, 2017).

One of the expected results of working in the third space is reducing the hierarchical structure in partnerships. Changing the participants' roles and co-constructing their professional identities in teacher education have a significant impact on achieving this goal. Working in the third space has the potential to transform inter-institutional relationships and build stronger and collaborative practices for the benefit of PSTs (Grudnoff et al., 2017). In the third space, participants need to co-construct new roles, cross boundaries, and contribute to new ways of practice (Grudnoff et al., 2017). Such transformative endeavors seem to be connected to epistemology and epistemic work.

In sum, negotiating identities is a central theme in the literature on the third space. It appears both in relation to different participants crossing traditional boundaries in their roles and to participants adopting new and hybrid roles. The second main theme to emerge is what we call the intersection of epistemologies.

3.2.2. The intersection of epistemologies

Of the 36 studies in this review, we found that 29 conceptualize the third space as an arena in which epistemologies converge and intersect. Twenty-three of these studies focus on new pedagogical possibilities for professional practice in ITE. Of these, four explore the role of digital solutions in maintaining or strengthening the third space of professional practice. The remaining 19 studies explore how the third space contributes to interconnecting knowledge sources.

3.2.2.1. New pedagogical possibilities. A trend across all the studies is the idea that the third space reinvigorates professional practice and partnerships in ITE. From Zeichner's (2010) study to the most recent ones, third space models of professional practice are seen as essential to counteract the hierarchical relationship between academic knowledge and practice-based knowledge of traditional models. These new pedagogical possibilities involve the use of digital tools (as we will explore below), practice labs (Laursen, 2015), retreat sessions (Williams et al., 2018), and other similar activities, which include UBTEs, SBTEs, PSTs, and other participants (e.g., Ikpeze et al., 2012; Jackson & Burch, 2016, 2019; Lee, 2018; Miles et al., 2016; Mutemeri & Chetty, 2011; Wood & Turner, 2014; Zeichner, 2010).

In general, these studies highlight the potential of the third space to open new pedagogical possibilities and to construct new ways to conduct professional practice. Therefore, the third space is conceptualized as a "framing construct" (Grudnoff et al., 2017, p. 191). The third space is not only used as an analytical or theoretical tool across the studies but also as a construct to renovate professional practice and an ideal arena where new pedagogical possibilities emerge (Beck, 2018; Souto-Manning & Martell, 2019). Further, for McDonough (2014), third space models must articulate new forms of pedagogy that correspond to the less hierarchical yet complex patterns of interaction and relationships in school–university partnerships.

In the studies conducted in Norway, the authors are concerned with the use of the third space (det tredje rom) to strengthen the links between schools and universities and to investigate how to best plan and enact partnerships. For example, Steele (2017) explores the adaptive supervision model and third space collaboration practices, while Skotheim et al. (2016) examine the professional practice model and find that the third space can be a "room for opportunity" as well as a requirement to achieve more symmetrical relations in partnerships. Similarly, Luthen and Kolstad (2018) and Lejonberg et al. (2017) highlight the potential of the third space to enhance collaborative partnerships and enrich professional practice. Thus, the Norwegian examples reflect

practical applications of the third space that dwell less on the conceptualization of the term and highlight the relevance of constructing stronger and less hierarchical partnerships in line with policy mandates (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Third space models of professional practice require a shift in the way we perceive and conduct partnerships. Participants in such models "work together rather than work with" (Jackson & Burch, 2016, p. 522), providing transformative opportunities for faculty, staff, partner schools, and local communities. We also see that the third space is becoming increasingly digital, and we explore this further in the following section.

3.2.2.2. A digital third space. In four of the 36 studies, the third space is facilitated by digital technologies. For instance, Youens et al. (2014) investigate how video-capture analysis of practice promotes collaboration and reciprocity in teacher education. Such analysis affords focused conversations in which TEs and PSTs discuss relevant questions about the practice. For Youens et al. (2014), the use of video-capture to support collaborative work in the third space provides new pedagogical possibilities for PSTs' professional learning.

Lewis (2012) focus on an online tool (Wiki) with which students engage in dialogue with peers and TEs about professional practice. One of Lewis's crucial findings is that Wiki and its use in the third space of practice enables discussions that go beyond pragmatic issues and propose new ideas that challenge traditional pedagogies in professional practice. Howell et al. (2017) examine the use of an online backchannel platform that allows PSTs and TEs to discuss relevant issues observed during classroom practice. This tool could potentially integrate and expand the participants' knowledge about practice, making explicit connections between theory and practice (Howell et al., 2017) in an online classroom environment.

Furthermore, Watters et al. (2018) explore the use of classroom videos in a PST education program. The study findings highlight the need to use authentic teaching scenarios and learning conversations to allow future teachers to learn from practice. The authors also point out the relevance of multimedia and technology-supported third spaces in teacher education, which facilitate the interactions among SBTEs, UBTEs, and PSTs in the construction of knowledge.

As these studies show, the use of digital tools in the third space of professional practice provides a unique opportunity for academic and practitioner knowledge to be merged and reconfigured in less hierarchical ways. In essence, these studies highlight the affordances of digital technologies, as they suspend constraints of time and space during professional practice. Furthermore, a digital third space offers the possibility to link heads, hands, emotions, and expertise in a shared space, fostering more horizontal forms of knowledge. This interconnection of knowledge sources is the focus of the following sub-theme.

3.2.2.3. Interconnecting knowledge sources. As we have examined so far, the third space is an arena where participants negotiate their identities, cross boundaries, and perform hybrid roles. Further, the third space is conceptualized as a construct for new pedagogical possibilities and new ways to enact professional practice in partnerships. In this section, we will explore how the studies (19) operationalize the third space as an arena where knowledge from different sources interconnects and where traditional notions of hierarchies are broken down.

In general, the studies suggest that the third space transforms the conception of vertical forms of knowledge in partnerships, challenging traditional teacher education practices. The third space allows the creation of more democratic models of professional

practice in which all the voices and knowledge sources are equally valued (Beck, 2018; Forgasz et al., 2018; Mutemeri & Chetty, 2011; Smith, 2016; Zeichner et al., 2015). The studies also conceptualize the third space as a transformative opportunity for all participants to discuss issues of practice, enhance spaces of reflection, and integrate academic and practitioner expertise (Martin et al., 2011; Passy et al., 2018; Sawyer et al., 2016; Steele, 2017).

In the third space, all sources of knowledge and expertise from and across groups interconnect, supporting new learning opportunities for PSTs (Ikpeze et al., 2012). Similarly, the third space can contribute to horizontal collaboration between schools and universities compared to the more hierarchical structure of epistemology in teacher education (Souto-Manning & Martell, 2019). The third space offers a framework for TEs and PSTs to work together in the construction of contemporary teacher education programs that transcend boundaries and strengthen the interconnection of academic and practitioner knowledge (Fitchett et al., 2018; Jackson & Burch, 2016, 2019).

In line with Zeichner (2010) and Zeichner et al. (2015), these studies elaborate on the potential of the third space to transform old ways of conducting professional practice and to establish models that promote less hierarchical relationships and more collaborative partnerships.

4. Discussion

The introduction of the *third space* concept to professional practice in ITE in the last decade has prompted increasing interest among scholars, practitioners, and policymakers. The popularity of the third space concept has grown, and the premise of achieving more collaborative partnerships in the co-construction of knowledge about teaching is appealing. In this scoping review, we mapped how the academic literature has conceptualized the third space as a concept and as a model for professional practice. In doing so, we found that researchers understand the third space as a place where participants' identities are in constant negotiation due to crossing boundaries and hybrid roles within the partnerships. In addition, the third space is an arena where epistemologies intersect, new pedagogies merge, and knowledge sources symmetrically interconnect.

The studies emphasize that, in partnerships as third spaces, knowledge acquired from the participants in local communities, universities, and schools should be central in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of teacher education programs. It is important to include all voices and grant them equal value to avoid thinking in terms of "others" who merely contribute and to welcome more shared responsibility and ownership of the programs.

The Norwegian local context serves to illustrate how the concept of the third space moves beyond the stage of theoretical conceptualization into policy and practice in ITE. This is particularly evident in both reports and recommendations from the panel commissioned by the Ministry of Education (2019 and 2020), which, based on research conducted internationally, but especially in Norway, adopts the third space as an arena and a strategy for improving partnerships in teacher education.

The efforts to enact more coherent practices and to interconnect knowledge from all different sources oppose the idea that academic knowledge is the authoritative source of knowledge about teaching to teach and learn. This new and expanded way to understand professional practice provides opportunities for learning about teaching in spaces where fewer hierarchies are permitted. Thus, this symmetrical interconnection of knowledge in the third space contributes to a fundamental shift in the focus on whose expertise counts in the education of future teachers.

As learning to teach is a dynamic and nonlinear endeavor that occurs across multiple spaces, relying separately upon the university or school is ineffective. Instead, as the studies in this review suggest, the expertise of all participants should be equally welcomed in a hybrid space where boundaries can be crossed and identities are constantly negotiated. Partnerships provide a third space that is collectively and continually in transition.

4.1. Tensions in the third space

We have explored and mapped how the literature conceptualizes the third space as an arena where identities change and epistemologies merge. However, the literature also reveals that tensions linger in the third space. Several of the studies acknowledge the challenges of achieving a harmonious third space and reaching the utopic goal of bringing theory and practice together in teacher education. Tensions in the third space appear between individuals, within and across groups and institutions, and in the practical application of the third space in teacher education. Power relations, the challenge of changing roles and identities, and the tensions between short-term solutions and sustainable cooperation in partnerships are some of the challenges explored in the studies.

We classify these tensions into two groups: relational tensions and tensions of development and sustainability. The former emphasizes the power struggles, the juxtaposition of discourses, and the tensions related to defining whose knowledge has more value. Tensions relating to crossing institutional and personal boundaries, shifting identities, and power differentials in the third space are also evident in the studies of Martin et al. (2011), Luthen and Kolstad (2018), Cuenca et al. (2011), Beck (2018), and McDonough (2014) and in the analysis of McDonough (2014) in Forgasz et al. (2018). Balancing blended relationships that integrate professional and personal connections among participants is challenging, often time consuming, and uncomfortable (Taylor et al., 2014).

Similarly, for Passy et al. (2018) and Martin et al. (2011), the collaborative nature of the third space embeds the participants in a challenging web of relationships. Cooperating within and across groups requires careful attention to the needs, perspectives, and interests of all the participants involved. According to Taylor et al. (2014), building a third space of collaboration to support PSTs does not happen automatically. In the process of breaking down hierarchies and co-constructing a community of knowledge that shares authority, responsibility, and agency, several tensions need to be navigated in a continual negotiation among participants and across institutions.

The tensions of development and sustainability deal with the practical difficulties of developing, applying, and sustaining the third space within teacher education over time. The third space needs to operate in a way that does not disrupt institutional norms (Klein et al., 2013) or the university policies or lack of them (Martin et al., 2011). The dependence on individuals and temporary resources is also problematic because the teacher education programs are dependent on the continuity of leadership at the university and the attainment of new grants to ensure the programs' sustainability (Klein et al., 2013). Teacher education that uses technology to facilitate the third space also faces challenges with implementation, as unstable Internet connections and the appropriate use of digital tools can be problematic (Howell et al., 2017; Watters et al., 2018).

Summing up, the studies report numerous tensions emerging from the third space of professional practice. However, the studies also acknowledge that these challenges are not meant to be solved but rather managed, as they are bound to reoccur in school–university partnerships. Beyond simply managing these

challenges, the goal is to compromise regarding the professional practice of future teachers, to keep the hierarchies flattened, and to co-construct knowledge in the third space.

The popularity of the third space has increased over the last couple of years, as is evident in the works of Chan (2019), Broadley et al. (2019), Jacobs et al. (2020), and Chan (2020), to name a few. Undoubtedly, the academic agenda over the last decade has focused on fostering partnerships as third spaces in the hope of contributing to a more successful and integrated professional practice in ITE. Thus, creating a consensus on what the concept entails and how it has been conceptualized in the literature offers an opportunity to strengthen general understandings and to inspire new research that aims to address the challenges that arise from such hybrid spaces. More notably in the current COVID-19 situation, there is a greater need to explore technology-enhanced third spaces that address the new challenges of remote teaching and learning.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, we explored 36 studies, following the criteria for conducting a literature scoping review. We provided a descriptive and substantive overview of the studies to explore how the academic literature has conceptualized and applied the third space as a concept and a model for professional practice in ITE from 2010 to 2019.

To different extents, all the studies conceptualize the third space as a construct where identities are in constant negotiation and where epistemologies converge. The potential of the third space to support a less hierarchical structure in school–university partnerships is evident across the studies. However, the studies also acknowledge tensions in the third space relating to both the participants' relationships and the sustainability of the third space in teacher education.

The utopian nature of the third space requires continuous negotiation for teacher education programs that aim to establish partnerships in this space. Such partnerships are not merely organizational constructions but seek to combine academic and experiential knowledge and different epistemologies for mutual professional development. The existence of the third space should not be taken for granted in ITE; instead, participants need to actively locate it and navigate its challenges to support future teachers in a lifelong process of constructing and enacting their roles. Thus, the third space is not a specific goal to be achieved but rather a continuous process, an ongoing effort.

We identified key themes emerging from our analysis. The implications of our findings suggest the importance of a common understanding of the term third space among TEs in schools and universities. Moreover, TEs need to be aware of the different participants who establish the epistemology of future teachers. To make use of the various sources of knowledge, PSTs need to be able to reflect and participate in the knowledge construction in the third space throughout their studies. Future research could examine how PSTs and TEs meet in the third space and how they get involved with various processes throughout the teacher education programs that prepare future teachers for the “pedagogy of becoming” (Klein et al., 2016, p. 267). Furthermore, given the present COVID-19 situation, future research might focus on the opportunities that digital technologies offer to foster a third space of professional practice in ITE, as suggested by some of the studies in this scoping review.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103338>.

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