

DEVELOPING BETTER PRACTICE FOR BEGINNING PRIMARY TEACHERS: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRACTICUM

Submitted by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Education

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November 2007

STATEMENT OF SOURCES

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

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This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committee (where required).

Candidate's signature.....

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Associate Professor, Kath Engebretson (ACU) I offer my sincere thanks for her professionalism, dedication and encouragement in completing this thesis. Her attention to detail, professionalism, interest and encouragement in my work has been outstanding. Professor Barry Fallon's (ACU) advice and assistance has been most valuable and is greatly appreciated.

I acknowledge the friendship and assistance given to me by Paul Carlin. Paul has been a most loyal and sincere friend both prior to, and during my Doctoral studies. His encouragement, advice and assistance have been most significant in enabling me to complete this study. I also wish to express my thanks to Dr Philip Clarkson and Dr Joe Fleming for their direction and wisdom.

To my wife Pamela, I thank her for her enduring support and love during this long and sometimes arduous journey. Her adaptability, sense of humour, loyalty and dedication in giving up much of her time to this cause has been nothing short of outstanding. I thank her dearly, as without her encouragement and assistance I would never have completed this Doctorate.

To my daughter Rosie, I thank her for her love, support and patience over many years of study. I also acknowledge and give thanks for the moral support given to me by my brother Michael. He has accompanied me on the long, arduous and often challenging journey of this thesis.

ABSTRACT

“Practicum” refers to the time students undertaking initial teacher education programs spend in schools during their training. Its purpose is to enable the university and accredited teachers to assist student teachers to gain experience in translating educational theory into classroom practice. It is recognised as a vital component of teacher education. In 1998 the Australian Catholic University (ACU National) Melbourne campus, introduced the ‘extended practicum’ into their teacher education program. The extended practicum, undertaken by students in their final year, is significant to student learning as it enables them to spend an extended period of time with the same group of pupils. However, to date this program has not been formally evaluated.

This study used qualitative methodology to investigate the effectiveness of the extended practicum in the Bachelor of Education course offered through the Trescowthick School of Education at ACU National Melbourne Campus. Literature pertaining to the development and current understandings of the practicum in teacher education and the partnership between the university and schools in managing the practicum was reviewed. Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were used to gather data about the experiences and reflections of pre-service teachers, first year teachers, supervising teachers and university staff involved in the extended practicum. The data were analysed and key themes were identified and compared between groups.

The findings suggested that while all stakeholders recognised the importance and value of the extended practicum in teacher education, their ideas about its major aims and strengths differed. A number of issues were identified that could improve the quality of the extended practicum and thus enhance the learning experience for pre-service teachers. These issues included preparation of the pre-service teachers, length and timing of the practicum, supervision and assessment of pre-service teachers during the practicum, professional

development for supervising teachers and most importantly improved communication between the university and schools.

Information from this study can inform the development of the extended practicum, and as a consequence, the total practical teaching program at ACU, (National), Melbourne. This will further support the ongoing relationships between the university and schools and teachers who support the program and who provide an improved learning opportunity for pre-service teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher Education in Australia

Introduction

Teacher education had its origins in France in the mid 16th century and spread throughout Europe due largely to the efforts of St. John Baptiste de la Salle (1651-1719) Francke (1663-1727) and Pestalozzi (1746-1827). The first formal curriculum was introduced in Germany in the 18th century and used the monitorial system of teacher training. This system of teacher education spread to the United States in the early nineteenth century and subsequently became an important foundation for the initial development of teacher education programs in other countries, including Australia.

In Australia, teacher education programs began during the 1850s. Initially, community leaders took responsibility for training and mentoring of teachers. Soon after, first in New South Wales and then Queensland, the ‘pupil teacher’ system was introduced. This program involved school principals and experienced teachers undertaking the training of aspiring teachers both during and after school hours (Dyson, 2003a). The training continued for varying periods of time, and when the principal assessed them as being ready, they were employed as beginning teachers in schools. While this was essentially an early form of apprenticeship training, it had no formal academic component. As such, it was the first form of the practicum (Hyams, 1979), the component of teacher education that is the subject of this thesis.

In the latter half of the 1880s, the first teacher training colleges were established in Australia and the first formal two-year teacher-training program for primary teachers was

introduced. At this time, there was little demand for secondary teachers as secondary education was available to only a few privileged students. In the first half of the 20th century the number of teachers colleges increased to cater for the growing population (Dyson, 2003a). In the early 1900s a small number of colleges introduced teacher education programs for secondary teachers and the first three-year courses were commenced (Leckey & Beekman, 2003). In order to meet the changing social, educational and employment demands, continuing developments in teacher education were required (Calderhead & Sharrock, 1997).

Following a number of Federal and State government inquiries into teacher education in the latter half of the 20th century, further developments were introduced (Eckersley, Walta, Walker, Davis, Smith, & Newton, 2001). In the 1980s, some teachers' colleges were incorporated into universities and initial teacher education courses were extended to four years. This reinforced the notion of primary teaching as a profession. From the 1980s the role of schools in initial teacher education became more significant with the introduction of chosen links between academic courses and school based learning in schools. This modified component of teacher learning was an up-dated version of the 'teacher-pupil' apprenticeship program of the 1850s (Carlin, 2004).

Variations of the practicum have existed in many forms over many years. While the practicum had its origins in the apprenticeship system, the changing roles and expectations of schools, universities and the wider community in a more globalised world has established a need to provide a more sophisticated and qualified workforce for the twenty-first century (Lugton, 2000).

The Practicum

For the purpose of consistency, the term ‘practicum’ is used in this thesis to refer to a specific component of the professional experience program, the extended practicum. The practicum is the program designed to enable student teachers to learn about the practice of teaching in schools with the support of and under the guidance of a supervising teacher (Cartwright, 2002). In this component of teacher education, cooperative and effective partnerships between participating schools and universities are developed. These partnerships are critical to the successful training of student teachers. The practicum has become a significant component of teacher education programs in Australian universities, and is designed to help student teachers develop professional competence in a range of school, university and community settings (Sharp, Squires, Lockhart, Cresswell & Groundwater-Smith, 1993; Wilson & Klein, 1999).

Since the 1980s the practicum has been subject to regular debate and critical review. Student teachers regard the practicum as a critical component of their pre-service training (Beach & Pearson, 1998) and it has been suggested that there is a connection between the quality of the practicum and commitment to teacher education by student teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2001). A review of teacher education concluded “in spite of the best efforts of some universities, teacher educators, employers and teachers, it is apparent that teacher education and schools are insufficiently connected, which impacts on the value of the practicum” (Ramsey, 2000. p. 107). Moran, Long and Nettle (2002) suggested that the ability of student teachers to link educational theory with practice during the practicum is one of the most challenging issues facing teacher education (Nelson, 2002). While the researchers agree on the importance of the practicum, there has been ongoing debate about the overall effectiveness of this practical component of teacher education.

The Context of the Research

Australian Catholic University (ACU National)

The development of teacher education at Australian Catholic University, (Melbourne) originated from teacher training colleges at Ballarat, Ascot Vale and Oakleigh. These colleges were amalgamated into the Institute of Catholic Education (Victoria) in 1974. In 1999, Catholic training colleges in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and Australian Capital Territory amalgamated to form the Australian Catholic University (ACU, National) (Appendix 1). With the formation of Australian Catholic University, teacher education programs became the responsibility of the Faculty of Education, (ACU National), with each state and territory having its own School of Education. The Victorian School of Education became known as the Trescowthick School of Education.

The Trescowthick School of Education is responsible for the education of student teachers for employment in Catholic, government and independent schools locally, nationally and internationally (Broadbent, 2003). This includes students undertaking placements in a number of schools under the control of state, independent and Catholic Education authorities. In 1996, the Trescowthick School of Education undertook a review of its professional experience (practicum) programs in the primary teacher education courses, the postgraduate Bachelor of Education degree and the Bachelor of Education. This review resulted in the introduction, in 1998, of the current extended practicum. This is the final practicum, in which undergraduate and post-graduate student teachers undertake a school-based placement of eight weeks in the final year of their course, prior to graduating as qualified teachers. The extended practicum, which is the focus of the research reported in this thesis, was introduced in the context of changing roles and responsibilities of key

stakeholders in the organization and supervision of the practicum. It was also introduced to meet the changing needs of student teachers (Sullivan, 2004). These needs were that student teachers integrate theory and practice and engage in the social construction of knowledge, work collaboratively with supervising teachers, examine a variety of teaching practices and engage in a range of school settings (Cartwright, 2002).

The Research

Recent governmental inquiries have recommended a review of all aspects of teacher education including the practicum (Ramsey, 2000; Asche, 1980). Given the significance of the school-based component in the preparation of beginning teachers, it is critical that the extended practicum implemented by Australian Catholic University, (Melbourne) is investigated and evaluated in its primary teacher education courses. The investigation described in this research outlines the perceptions of the key stakeholders engaged in the extended practicum, the extent to which changes have impacted on the effectiveness of the extended practicum, university staff, supervising teachers and students, and ways in which the extended practicum program may be further improved.

The research questions were designed to generate data from the stakeholders involved in the extended practicum. The questions which guided the research were:

1). How do the key stakeholders (supervising teachers, pre-service teachers, first year teachers and university staff) understand the key purposes of the extended practicum in the undergraduate and postgraduate primary pre-service Bachelor of Education degrees at ACU National, School of Education Victoria?

2). How do these stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of this extended practicum in assisting students to, reflect on and apply their university learning in schools?

3). Does the extended practicum help pre- service teachers to link theory with practice in the classroom? If so, how does it achieve this? If not, what factors work against this linking of theory with practice?

4). What are the future implications of this data for the continuation of the extended practicum at ACU National, Trescowthick School of Education (Melbourne) and in teacher education in general?

Significance of the Research

This study is of significant value to the key stakeholders involved in the extended practicum. These stakeholders are pre-service teachers, supervising teachers in schools where students undertake the practicum, the university, and academics in the field of teacher education. In addition, the findings of this research are of wider significance to education, generally, and more specifically, teacher education and they add to the body of knowledge available on the practicum, knowledge which has the potential to inform initial teacher education programs.

The research reported in this thesis contributes to the ongoing review of primary teacher education programs at Australian Catholic University, and as such contributes to the future quality of pre-service education offered through the Trescowthick School of Education, as well as reinforcing the significance of the extended practicum. Furthermore, it is expected that as a result of this study Australian Catholic University will further develop strong collaborative partnerships with schools that will ensure that staff and students are actually involved in the educational community (ACU Strategic Plan, 1999-2008). This research provides the researcher with critical knowledge of professional experience, which will inform further initiatives relating to the extended practicum at Australian Catholic University.

As a consequence of this study, it is anticipated that ACU National, and its affiliated primary schools will demonstrate self-accountability by improving the quality of supervision provided for student teachers. Furthermore, improved partnerships may provide schools with programs in teacher education that will support the professional development of supervising teachers. Firstly, it is expected that this research will result in a more positive learning experience for pre - service teachers. This may be achieved through increased effectiveness in the organization and administration of the extended practicum and the development of relevant, fair and pedagogically sound assessment procedures for students. This factor, combined with support and constructive feedback from schools, supervising teachers and the university will enhance the development of effective teaching and professional skills for beginning teachers.

The Role of the Researcher

The researcher was a participant in the introduction of the extended practicum in the primary education courses in the Trescowthick School of Education (Melbourne) and was appointed co-ordinator of this program prior to and during its inception in 1998. He has been involved in the practicum in a range of responsibilities that have complemented his interest in this area of teacher education. These have included co-ordinating the extended practicum component of the Professional Experience Program, supervising students on placement, liaising with supervising teachers, coordinators and principals, assisting with students who are facing difficulties during their placements and providing professional development for supervising teachers. He is employed as an academic in the Trescowthick School of Education, (Melbourne).

Conclusion

This section has provided an introduction to the research, and this is developed in the chapters that follow. It has referred to the development of teacher education, with specific reference to the extended practicum in primary pre-service courses at Australian Catholic University, Trescowthick School of Education (Melbourne). It has identified the need to review this program and has discussed the significance of the research. It has also presented the four research questions that directed the study. The following chapters in this thesis provide the Australian context of the research, critically reviewing the literature relating to the development of the practicum and its role in teacher education. Subsequent chapters describe the methodology used in the study and the results obtained from the analysis of the data. Finally, the findings from the study are reviewed in the context of current literature relating to the practicum, and recommendations relating to the extended practicum at ACU Melbourne are presented.

CHAPTER ONE
CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

Historical Overview of Teacher Education in Australia

Introduction

This chapter explores the historical development of teacher education in Australia and shows how a succession of government inquiries has helped to shape Australian teacher education as it is today. It provides an overview of the two major periods in its development, namely 1850 – 1950 and from 1950 - 2005. The latter period was shaped by a number of Government inquiries, and these in turn, were a catalyst for Catholic education authorities to move from a rather loose and autonomous collection of schools to formal structures at the diocesan, state and national level. All of this is important contextual material for the research reported in this thesis.

1850-1950

This period occurred at a time in Australia's history when it was still in the early stages of nation building. Initially, teacher education in Australia was based on the 'apprenticeship' system of training with little evidence of formal education in colleges or universities (Hyams, 1979). Those who had previous training in education or leadership in local communities generally undertook the training of teachers. In the early 1850's the 'teacher pupil system' or 'model' school of teacher training was implemented. In this model of teacher training, master teachers instructed trainee teachers during and after school hours (Mc Neil, 1979; Auchmuty, 1980; McCreadie, 1998).

The Education Act, passed by the Victorian Government in 1872, ensured that education would be free, compulsory and secular (Leckey & Beekman, 2003). Formal teacher education in Victoria commenced in 1870 when the Training Institution offered the first two-year Teachers' Certificate for primary teachers. In 1903, the University of Melbourne offered its first Diploma of Education Course, and in 1917, introduced a two-year independent training course for kindergarten teachers. This course was a forerunner to a Bachelor of Education degree introduced in 1936 (Leckey & Beekman, 2003). These courses used an apprenticeship system of teacher education that was introduced first in Victoria and New South Wales, and later adopted in Western Australia, Tasmania and Queensland (Dyson, 2003). However, the 'teacher-pupil system' was limited in that trainee teachers were often sent into schools with little preparation, were subject to excessive workloads, and had minimal educational experience (Dyson, 2003).

During the latter part of the 1950s, teacher education in Australia witnessed a number of problems including funding and teacher supply and demand issues (Dyson, 2003). These factors created a need to expand the level of education offered at primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Dyson, 2003). Additional teachers' colleges were established in both metropolitan and country areas to provide for the social and educational needs of many new immigrants (Martin, 1964). As the demand for teacher education grew in Australia in the early 1940s, a number of significant developments took place in Victoria. This phase in teacher education was noted for its move towards more academically orientated programs being undertaken in universities. This raised the status of the teaching profession, and the control of teacher education moved from schools to the tertiary sector. With this change, the control of funding also moved from Federal to State governments (Rogan, 2000). World War 2 was probably the event that signified the end of this period, and the post –

war period gave rise to a set of factors that required a different approach which characterised the next period.

1950 to 2005

In the period following World War 2, a significant increase in population resulted in a need to re - evaluate existing structures and goals of primary education (Murray, 1957). From the mid 1960s the nature and delivery of funding and governance of teacher education was significantly transformed, and this ultimately presented a range of implications for the practicum. Following the Martin Report (1964) the binary system of higher education was implemented and this consisted of two sectors, namely Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs) and universities. Funding for both universities and CAEs was based on a shared existence between states under the Commission for CAE's and the Commonwealth, under the Australian Universities Commission (AUC). While universities continued to negotiate directly with the AUC concerning funding, the CAEs were subject to state authority with each state forming its own coordinating body. This body assisted the CAEs in the formation of policy and related directly with the Commission of Advanced Education in Canberra. It was this body that represented the CAEs within each State of the Commonwealth (De Cruz & Langford, 1990).

During the latter part of the 1960's and early 1970's both universities and CAEs were subject to increased administrative responsibilities necessary for funding in higher education. However, the advent of the Whitlam Government in 1974 saw a shift of focus in the funding structure for higher education in which the Colleges Commission and the AUC merged to form the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) in 1977. As a direct result of this amalgamation the power of the Commonwealth to control funding increased while the corresponding powers of the states were reduced. During the 1970's

and 1980's the CTEC had significant autonomy regarding decisions on financial matters as well as the distribution of funds to institutions (De Cruz & Langford, 1990). During the 1980's teacher education institutions which were previously constituents of state formed colleges, became embedded in universities. These changes in funding structure resulted in a reduction in the number of student teachers being accepted into teacher education courses, an increase in the number of sessional staff employed in academic roles, and changes to both the content and nature of teaching practice (Dyson, 2003). Ramsey (2000, p. 180) suggested that the "resultant effects of these changes was reflected by a lack of professional experience in courses as well as a loss of effective links with schools and too little emphasis on excellence and best practice". The rationale for these reductions was to provide a system of teacher training that would be uniform, consistent and economically viable to meet the changing needs and expectations of a wider community. The development of teacher education during this period was strongly influenced by community expectations, secular influences and government policies (Dyson, 2003).

The transition of teacher training institutes to universities was seen as a critical step in the development and progression of teacher education in Australia both from a state and national perspective. This significance of this transition was reflected by De Cruz and Langford (1990) in their historical analysis of a number of important events that took place in the period 1987-1991. These included the appointment of Dawkins (Minister of Education) in 1987. In 1987 the CTEC was abolished along with the creation of an open-university system. In 1987 the Green Paper was adopted by parliament and was followed by the adoption of the White Paper in 1988. The Binary system was officially abolished and replaced by a new unified national system comprising universities and colleges. In the 1990's small institutions (CAE's) merged with larger colleges (De Cruz & Langford, 1990).

The Australian Catholic University, also part of this transition was formed following the amalgamation of a number of teacher training colleges in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory in 1991.

The period following World War 2 was most important in the development of teacher education in Australia in that changing social and economic conditions combined with undertaking of a number of educational inquiries by Commonwealth and State Governments witnessed changes in the areas of educational organisation and administration. In particular, changes to the structure and allocation of funding to schools and universities was most significant from the 1950's onwards and this has been reflected in the quality and provision of education in Australia in the twenty-first century

The following section of this chapter outlines some of the major government reports and inquiries that were promulgated between 1950 and 2005, and notes their impact on the development of teacher education in Australia.

Overview of Reports and Inquiries into Teacher Education in Australia between 1950 and 2005.

Introduction

The role of initial teacher education in preparing competent beginning teachers had been the subject of numerous governmental reports and inquiries in many countries including the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Hong Kong (Ling, 2001). Following this trend similar reports and inquiries into teacher education in Australia were also undertaken at both state and national level (Nelson, 2002; Ramsey, 2000). The consequent restructuring of teacher education programs was influenced by changes in

government policy, budgets for teacher education programs, advances in pedagogy, as well as continual changes to teacher education including the practicum.

This section of the chapter identifies the most significant of these reports and indicates how they have influenced teacher education courses, including the practicum.

The Martin & Swanson Reports

The Martin Report, (1964) commissioned by the Commonwealth Government in 1963 undertook a review of the development of teacher education in Australia. It's recommendations included additional federal funding, establishing entry standards for tertiary education, increased duration of courses and provisions for improved professional development for teacher educators. This report advocated a synergy between educational theory and practice, again noting the importance of professional practice in teacher education. The major recommendations of the report were accepted and as a result State Teachers Colleges merged with Colleges of Advanced Education. As has been demonstrated, the most significant aspect of this merger was that teacher education became federally controlled. This provided uniformity and consistency in the funding of teacher education programs across all states (Hyams, 1979, cited in Dyson, 2003).

During the 1970s and 80s, the practicum became recognised as an important component of teacher education in Australia. It was considered critical in that it provided both trained teachers and student teachers with opportunities to practise and reflect on their performance, while at the same time developing their level of knowledge and teaching skills (Tabart, 1989). The implementation of the Karmel Report (1972) resulted in increased allocations of monies to schools and in particular, Catholic schools. This, combined with an upgrading in teacher training, helped to raise the status and standard of teaching in Australian schools (O'Brien, 1990).

The Swanson Report, (1973) suggested that teaching went beyond being a vocational role, claiming that it was a reflective, creative and continually developing profession. This reinforced both the theoretical and practical dimensions of teaching. It also stressed the need for teachers to be familiar with and competent to deliver curriculum, as well as their ability to relate content to the needs and interests of their students. Throughout this period, tertiary institutions implemented a number of adjustments in response to both policy and structural changes within their organizations. These adjustments recognised the importance of the practicum, noting that it could be undertaken in a range of teaching settings and placement blocks, and could incorporate partnerships between teaching institutions and schools (Brown, Martinez, Tromans, & White, 2002).

The Achmuty and Ashe Inquiries

The Achmuty Report (1980) originated from a National Inquiry into Teacher Education and was quickly followed by the Ashe Inquiry (1980) in Victoria. The subsequent reports were significant in that they both reinforced the importance of the practicum in pre-service teacher education and made specific reference to it in their recommendations. The purpose of these enquiries was to make recommendations for the improvement of teaching and learning in government and non-government schools. The Achmuty Report addressed the pre-service, induction and professional development of beginning teachers. Specifically, it recommended that the professional practice component of teacher education should facilitate student teachers to undertake a sequentially developed program, thereby addressing one of the challenging issues facing the practicum. This report, also suggested that supervising teachers should be selected by the school principal in consultation with the training institution, and that these teachers should be given an appropriate time allowance to work with their students (Achmuty, 1980).

The Asche Enquiry (1980) had similar terms of reference to the national enquiry. It considered the (National) findings and recommendations in its (Victorian) report. It made a number of recommendations, including an expansion of funding for teacher training, that equity issues be addressed, administrative procedures be improved, registration of teachers introduced, professional development opportunities be increased and that the teacher workforce be considered in the recruitment and training of teachers. It further recommended that the practicum component in all teacher education programs be increased by one third, that schools and training institutions cooperate by providing courses for school experience supervisors; and that the practicum be theoretically grounded, adequately supervised, and, undertaken early in the course.

The development of teacher education in the period 1960's to the mid 1980's was undoubtedly influenced by a number of Inquiries and Commissions that have impacted significantly on the practicum. For example, the Martin Report (1964) resulted in increased funds being made available to Australian universities. The Report was most critical to the development of the practicum in that it recommended:

adequate financial support should be provided by the Commonwealth Government to back up the existing State contribution; it set up standards of entrance for tertiary students; recommended that increased lengths of teacher training courses as well as recommending that all involved in education should be professionally trained (Dyson, et al, 2003, p. 3).

The practicum during this same period continued to undergo a transformation in a number of areas which included policy formation and distribution of funding. The expansion of universities and CAE's witnessed increased numbers undertaking teacher education courses, and this created a need for the practicum to be undertaken on a much broader scale throughout metropolitan and country schools. Consequently, funding was increased not only to improve the qualification and experiences of supervising teachers

who were required to undertake the supervision of pre-service teachers, but also to establish increased placement opportunities for them.

Dawkins, Preston and Ramsey Inquiries

In 1987, Dawkins (Federal Minister of Education and Training in the Labour Government) initiated significant structural reform within the Australian education system. As a result the binary system, in which states operated independently, was replaced by a unified national system of teacher training. This change helped improve the training of teachers so they could meet the needs of a more diverse community. The National Preston Report (2000) was the outcome of the National Standards and Guidelines for the Initial Teacher Education Project, 1998. This Report, commissioned by the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) provided a framework “to allow significant stakeholders input to the content and nature of pre-service teacher education courses, while still maintaining the integrity of individual institutions” (Sullivan, 2001, p. 4).

One of the most significant reviews of initial teacher education and, in particular, the practicum was the Ramsey Report (2000). It recognised that lecturers in education and student teachers both regarded the practicum as being important, however, it noted that “the range of practicum experiences provided for student teachers is often narrow and fails to expose them to the diversity of teaching in contemporary schools and other settings (p. 60), and “it was desirable to maximise the amount of time students are engaged in the practicum” (p. 60). It also acknowledged that the development of partnerships between schools and universities provided a total school context for the practicum.

However, this expansion posed some challenges for managing resources for the practicum. Ramsey (2000) stated:

the teacher education programs become very fragmented
and hard to sustain given that each university tries to divide

its program into; early childhood, primary and secondary and adult education; six primary and eight secondary key learning areas; and undergraduate and post graduate education ... the quality of teacher education programs suffer, the power of the teacher education faculty to attract funds is weakened and generally the needs of the individual universities rather than State come to be served. There is a case for reducing significantly the number of providers, or at least the number of courses leaving involved only those universities prepared to give appropriate priority to teacher education. A group of universities could work together to offer similar courses at graduate and undergraduate level. While on the face of it, such an approach has advantages, the mechanisms by which this might be approached would need careful consideration (p. 171).

The Ramsey Report (2000) made a number of recommendations relating to teacher education with specific recommendations appropriate to the practicum. These included, that “universities, in cooperation with employers and the profession, develop models of teacher education which place professional experience at their core and require joint planning, delivery and reporting” (p. 39). It recommended that “professional experience of student teachers be provided in a range of settings” (p. 63) “there should be a diversity of entry pathways into teaching, “effective professional experience must be the core of initial teacher preparation”, “funded courses must have a focus on teacher quality” (p. 186), The “final pre-service professional experience should be substantial and occur in a setting similar to that where employment for the individual teacher is most likely to be found” (p. 64). Finally it recommended that the “professional experience component of initial teacher education should give student teachers significant structured learning about the operation and culture of schools, including perspectives across different school systems, ethics in teaching and the role of the teacher as a change agent” (p. 64).

Ramsey (2000) stated there was a:

mixed government/non - government school system providing education to the people of New South Wales and its diversity is likely to increase. What the State needs is the

best mixed systems of both government and non - government schools able to apply effectively all the resources, both Commonwealth and State, that are able to prepare teachers (p. 187).

In conclusion, Ramsey (2000) stated that to form a Unified National System of teacher education, the States and Commonwealth needed to implement a range of effective measures that would allow universities to determine the most effective mechanisms for meeting the needs of all schools and teachers. “Currently each university is preparing some teachers, yet none can be considered fully effective in terms of quality or meeting needs as perceived by employers” (p. 187).

Parliament of Victoria Education and Training Committee

The Parliament of Victoria Education and Training Committee (PVETC) (2005) commissioned the most recent inquiry into teacher education in Victoria. Chaired by Herbert, it investigated the suitability of current pre-service teacher training courses. The teaching practicum was a key area of consideration throughout the inquiry, with key stakeholders overwhelmingly believing that the current time spent in the practicum as well as the quality of the experience was significantly inadequate (PVET, 2005).

It was particularly concerned about how best to prepare teachers for teaching in the twenty first century. The subsequent report, ‘Step Up, Step In, Step Out’ presented its findings in 2005 (PVETC, 2005). The committee found a range of discrepancies between courses and “revealed significant disquiet regarding the quality of teacher education currently being delivered in Victoria” (PVETC, 2005, p. xviii). It further found that while new graduates had adequate theoretical foundations they were lacking in practical teaching skills. Most significantly the committee stressed the need for increased involvement between universities and schools. While they recognised that some universities had

established partnerships with schools, they recommended that the Victorian Institute of Teaching, (VIT) “require universities to set up partnerships with local schools and to consult regularly with key stakeholders including teachers, principals, professional bodies, parent representatives and employing authorities” (PVETC, 2005 p. xix). The report made a range of recommendations relating to teacher education. Included in these were a series of recommendations relating to the practicum.

These recommendations were:

a). that the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) develop a set of common standards applicable to all education providers,

b). that the Victorian Institute of Teaching incorporate a range of guidelines into its new requirements for course accreditation e.g. That the teaching practicum involve pre-service teachers in undertaking the range of tasks that make up a teacher’s role, including planning, assessing and reporting,

c). that as a coordinator of course accreditation and future teacher registration, the VIT introduce a requirement that pre- service teachers complete a minimum of 130 days of supervised teaching practice during an undergraduate course or 80 days of supervised teaching practice during a post graduate course,

d). that through MCEETYA, the Victorian Government pursue a national standard regarding the minimum number of days of teaching practice to be undertaken by pre-service teachers,

e). that the Department of Education and Training develop guidelines for the practicum to occur outside school where appropriate. For example, TAFE Institutes and registered training providers,

f). that the Department of Education to consider expanding its new Career Change Program,

g). that the VIT to ensure that partnerships are developed through universities and schools, that the practicum is comprehensively addressed, regular school visits are made by university staff to schools and its integration with university- based coursework and how it should be supervised and assessed,

h). that the VIT develop an accreditation framework for school – based pre-service teacher supervisors,

i). that the Department of Education and Training and other employing authorities devise detailed protocols outlining the expectations and requirements of pre-service teachers and schools during teaching practice placements,

j). that the VIT require students to undertake teaching experience in a range of schools and where practical, one teaching placement to be in a non-metropolitan area,

k). that the VIT require pre- service teachers to complete, in addition to their formal teaching practice, at least 20 days of relevant field experience during an undergraduate course or 10 days during a postgraduate course” (pp. 18-20).

Recent inquiries into teacher education in Victoria have resulted in the implementation of a wide range of strategies and subsequent recommendations that have been directed towards the improvement of teacher education and in particular, the practicum in Victoria. The development of partnerships, standards of teaching, increased length of the practicum, improved communication between the Victorian Institute of Teaching and its affiliated schools and universities are examples of some of steps that have been introduced to raise the profile and standards of teacher education in Victoria.

More recently, the move towards the introduction of competency standards for all teachers, beginning and experienced, has had an impact on initial teacher education programs. In Victoria, the Victorian Institute of Teaching, (established in 2001) introduced a five-year review cycle. Starting in 2003 all courses (including any new courses) are to be

reviewed. The VIT, which replaced the Standards Council for the Teaching Profession in 2002, has implemented changes that include the development of standards for the teaching profession and the registration of all teacher education graduates (Bradly, 2002). By implementing these requirements for all teachers, the VIT has moved to ensure the quality of teacher education in Victoria (Halliday, 2002).

It is critical that improved standards of teacher education and in particular, the practicum continue to reflect the changing responsibilities undertaken by pre-service and teacher educators from both a local and national perspective. As the demands of teaching continue to change, it is important that teacher educators continue to work in a climate which encompasses responsibility, professionalism and an ability to identify and address the increasing demands of teacher education in the twenty-first century.

History of Catholic Teacher Education in Australia

Catholic teacher education in Australia developed in similar ways to federal and state programs. Prior to the 1870s, parents, and those who demonstrated a knowledge of or commitment to the Catholic faith provided teacher education in Catholic schools. While the education provided to pupils was somewhat basic and limited due largely to the unavailability of teaching resources, it enabled pupils to survive with the rudiments of knowledge during a time of social and economic change (Rogan, 2000 pp. 17-18).

Teacher education in Australian Catholic schools faced a major crisis in 1872 when funding was withdrawn from Church schools and state education became free, compulsory and secular. Prior to this, the significance of Catholic schools was clearly evident in that they were responsible “for educating 21,200 out of 46,000 Catholic children in the colony” (Blee, 2004, p. 2). However, the situation in Catholic education in Australia deteriorated as

many Catholic teachers joined state schools, which offered higher salaries and improved teaching resources. From the early 1870s, the Catholic system of education survived largely due to the efforts of religious orders of priests, nuns and brothers who worked for minimum wages and who often had to work under challenging physical and social conditions. It was not until 1964 when state aid was again directed to Catholic schools that the situation began to improve and Catholic schools began to show some degree of uniformity and consolidation (O'Farrell, 1985).

Religious Orders such as Mercy and Loreto nuns initially undertook formal education for teachers in Catholic schools. In this system, women in religious orders often assumed leadership roles such as school principals and teachers in rural and metropolitan communities. These experiences proved to be influential with the first Catholic teacher training college being opened in Victoria in 1884 in Ballarat by the Loreto Sisters (Rogan, 2000). The establishment of the Mercy Teacher Training College in Ascot Vale (Melbourne) followed this in 1909.

In Victoria, these two teacher-training colleges and a more recently established campus at Oakleigh (Melbourne) amalgamated to form the Institute of Catholic Education in 1974. In 1999, these colleges were incorporated into the Australian Catholic University. Similar amalgamations occurred in other states during this period, prompted by a need to develop a uniform system of teacher education programs, rationalisation of resources and an ability to work with other educational institutions including Technical and Further Education Colleges (TAFE). As has been shown, the Dawkins Report (1987) was significant in that it embedded Colleges of Advanced Education into universities. This process of amalgamation incorporated Catholic colleges under the auspices of Catholic Education in Australia.

The development of Catholic education in Australia has been most significant, “No system of schools anywhere has produced social mobility to equal what was done by the Catholic schools in Australia in the 19th century” (Pell, 2004, p. 1). In the 21st century Catholic education in Australia continues to provide a system of quality education in schools, communities and areas of higher education. Their developments aimed to maintain and extend the values of teacher education and, in particular promote the ethos of Catholic education across wider boundaries, including schools and tertiary institutions (Rogan, 2000).

In understanding the significance and transformation of Catholic education in Victoria the emergence of the Catholic Education Offices has been most profound. O’Brien (1999) stated that:

“in the early 1960’s “Catholic education consisted of a jumbled collection of parish primary and secondary schools and various kinds of schools run by religious orders with varying degrees of autonomy from the diocese in which they were located. These schools could hardly have been called a “system” – not in Victoria, or in any other state or territory, or nationally” (p. 5).

By the 1980’s Catholic education in Victoria was represented by a formal body the Catholic Education Office of Victoria (CEO) and this development was mirrored in other archdioceses. Its organisation was significantly different from that which underpinned parallel government structures and associated departments. The CEO was most constructive in that it merged and integrated schools in a style that promoted consultancy, accountability and uniform curriculum development as an integral component of its administration and organisation. One of the critical outcomes of this systematic structuring of Catholic schooling throughout Australia, and in particular, Victoria and New South Wales, was that by the early 1980’s its standing and associated credibility within the

education community played a significant role when issues of education were discussed at a national parliamentary level (O'Brien, et al, 1999).

The Australian Schools Commission formed following the election of the Whitlam Government in 1972 was most influential in the continued development and prosperity of the Catholic system, in that it was responsible for the injection of significant funding which supported its expansion across a wide range of educational areas. This initiative by the Labour Government in 1972 resulted in the separation of funding for the church and state. Due to the fact that Catholic education authorities had established effectively controlled mechanisms to distribute their increased funding, the establishment of the Innovations Program of the Australian Schools Commission resulted in funds being allocated and distributed directly to all schools throughout Australia.

The present position of the Catholic Education Offices (CEO's) throughout Australia has had significant influence not only on the development of Catholic education specifically but on education generally. Furthermore, the influence of the CEO's has been demonstrated across many areas of teacher education and these have impacted significantly on the changing nature and trends in teacher education both from a federal and state perspective. In particular, the role of the Catholic Education Commission is most important in that it has responsibility for the distribution of funds to its systemic school system through the CEO's.

Catholic teacher education has been a significant component of the education system within the context of Australian history. In its earlier years formal education was provided by those of the Catholic faith. This included teachers, members of religious orders and parents. The development of Catholic teacher training institutions across Australian states emerged largely as a result of the efforts of religious orders that migrated from France,

Ireland and England. Catholic education continued to develop although the withdrawal of funding in 1872 to Church schools which saw state education become free, compulsory and secular was a major problem which needed to be overcome. The granting of state aid to Catholic schools in 1964 was most significant and this resulted in many Catholic schools becoming consolidated and more uniform in their approach to providing a system of quality education. The establishment of teacher training colleges in the 1970's, and their incorporation into a National university system in the late 1990's further demonstrated the existence, viability, and influence of Catholic teacher education in Australia, and in particular, Victoria.

The following section of this chapter outlines the history of Australian Catholic University, the institution in which the research described in this thesis was located. It describes its role in the development of primary teacher education, thus placing it within the broader context of Catholic education in Australia.

History of the Practicum at Australian Catholic University

ACU - A Multi Campus University

Australian Catholic University (ACU National) has played a significant role in the development of teacher education over a number of years. The University had its origins in the 1800s when Religious Orders and Institutes began preparing teachers to work in Catholic schools. Earlier teacher education undertaken by religious orders (Loreto in Ballarat, Christian Brothers in Box Hill and Jesuits in Sydney) was significant in influencing the growth and development of Catholic teacher training in Australia. As discussed previously, the Australian Catholic University (National) was formed following the amalgamation of four Catholic institutions of higher education in eastern Australia. A series of amalgamations, relocations and transfers of responsibilities and diocesan

initiatives, resulted in the development of Australian Catholic University (Broadbent, 2003). It formally commenced operation on January 1, 1991. The three foundation faculties were Arts and Sciences, Education and Health Sciences. The mission statement of ACU National states that the university “shares a commitment to quality in teaching, research and service and aspires to be a community characterised by free inquiry and academic integrity. The University’s inspiration, located within 2000 years of Catholic intellectual tradition, summons it to attend to all that is of concern to human beings. It brings a distinctive and spiritual perspective to the common tasks of higher education” (ACU National Handbook, 2004, p. 3). The university has six campuses, two in Victoria, two in Sydney, and one each in Queensland and Australian Capital Territory (Appendix 1).

On each of these campuses, teacher education programs form a significant part of the total programs offered to students. McAuley Campus, Queensland offers programs in teacher education with particular focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. McKillop Campus, in New South Wales dates back to 1863 and is located at North Sydney and Strathfield (Mount Saint Mary). McKillop Campus is named after Mary McKillop, founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph, in South Australia in 1866. In 1913 the Sisters established a teacher training school for members of their Order. The first lay students were admitted to the North Sydney Campus in 1958, and in 1971, the Campus became the Catholic Teacher’s College (ACU National Handbook, 2004). In 1982 this Campus became part of the Catholic College of Education, Sydney. Strathfield campus was formerly used as a teachers college, founded by the Christian Brothers in 1908. In 1973, lay students were admitted to the college, followed by women in 1982.

Signadou Campus in Canberra (Australian Capital Territory) is named after the founder of the Dominican Order in the 13th century. The Dominican Sisters’ Teacher Training College founded in Maitland, New South Wales in 1926 moved to Canberra in

1963. Since this time the campus has undertaken a leading role in teacher education, particularly at undergraduate level. In Victoria, the Australian Catholic University is located on two campuses. The campus at Ballarat (Aquinas) was founded by the Sisters of Mercy, and commenced training for Catholic teachers in 1909. In 1974, this college formed part of the Catholic Teachers' College that later became part of the Institute of Catholic Education. This Institute was formed by an amalgamation of Christ College, Oakleigh, founded in 1967 and Mercy Teacher's College, Ascot Vale, founded in 1908. St. Patrick's Campus, Melbourne was established in 2000 as a result of a merger of Christ College and Mercy Teachers College.

Undergraduate primary teacher education courses are conducted across all ACU National campuses. There are common structures, and common units in all Schools of the Faculty (ACU National Handbook, 2003). These programs are consistent with the guidelines of the VIT (2004). Three elements, foundation studies, an elective sequence and professional studies are components of programs in all states, although each state has varying contextual and registration requirements for their teacher education courses (ACU National Handbook, 2003). The professional studies component (the practicum) involves teacher education students being placed in schools for varying lengths of time under the mentorship of a supervising teacher to learn about and gain experience in classroom teaching and student management. This component is normally undertaken across a range of school and community settings.

The practicum at Australian Catholic University is an integral part of teacher education however it challenges schools and the university to respond to a wide range of issues that impact on teacher education. These issues include changes to funding and staffing, academic and professional requirements of student teachers, supervising teachers and the practicum, increasing diversity in schools and working in a more complex, global

world, (Ramsey, 2000). These issues continue to influence changes to teacher education programs throughout Australia, in particular, to the way professional studies (the practicum) is implemented (Kennedy & Dorman, 2002).

Developing the Practicum

The practicum introduced at the Institute of Catholic Education (Victoria) in the 1970s was based on the apprenticeship model of teacher training. As part of their training course, student teachers were placed in Catholic schools to observe and learn from practising teachers. The practicum was mainly the responsibility of the training college, however, some Catholic school staff were also employed either part time or full time to teach at the Institute. This was significant as it espoused the Catholic ethos and doctrines of religious education in schools. Importantly it also signalled the establishment of partnerships between schools and the respective training institutions.

In the early to middle 1980s, student teachers from the Institute of Catholic Education were able to undertake the practicum in both Catholic and State schools. Teaching and supervision resources supported this link between teaching staff in schools and the Institute (Kenny, 1996). However, during this time, the supervision of student teachers became more autocratic, with the supervision of student teachers predominately being the responsibility of the Institute of Catholic Education (Victoria). Supervising staff from the training colleges were responsible for the design and implementation of the curriculum and assessment of student teachers in schools, and it was their responsibility to ensure that student teachers were placed, supervised and assessed appropriately in schools. This assessment process was undertaken when staff visited students during each practicum. As a result, student teachers received limited input from supervising teachers and coordinators in schools.

The following discussion focuses on the more recent development of the professional studies program (practicum) in the Trescowthick School of Education, (Melbourne). In its formative years the practicum was based on the model of teacher training initially established by the Institute of Catholic Education, (Victoria) in the late 1970s. This professional studies program assisted student teachers in learning the craft of teaching by implementing a graduated teaching program with the support and direction of supervising teachers (Cartwright, 2002). During the early 1990s, the 'Partnership Model' of Supervision was introduced at Australian Catholic University (Trescowthick School of Education). The Standards Council for the Teaching Profession (Victoria, 1994) endorsed this form of supervision as it invited shared ownership of the practicum, with specific roles and responsibilities for both schools and the university. This model of supervision proved to be significant as it recognised both the expertise and constraints of both parties. This change enabled training schools to become more significant partners with the university, and to have a more equal decision-making power in the structure, process and assessment of the practicum. These changes also recognised the more responsible role that schools and their staff undertake in supervising student teachers during their practicum (ACU, Professional Experience Guidelines Booklet, pp. 2-3, 2004).

The two stakeholders in the Professional Studies Program from the university are the coordinator of the professional studies program and university staff. The coordinator oversees the administration, academic content and liaison between university and schools. The university lecturers are responsible for the delivery of the academic content of the practicum units undertaken at the university and the final assessment of student teachers both in schools and at the university. Key stakeholders in the schools are the supervising teachers (who supervise student teachers in their classroom) and coordinating teachers (who oversee the practicum program in schools and support both supervising and student

teachers). The student teacher is a key stakeholder in the practicum and is responsible and accountable to the individuals and groups within each organisation. The theory/practice relationship as it is forged through the practicum is most important as it assists student teachers, supervising teachers and university staff to place theoretical aspects of teaching into actual teaching practice.

The Practicum within Primary Pre-service Degrees

At ACU National (Melbourne) students entering primary teaching have three options in undertaking their teacher training (Sullivan, 2001). Firstly, students can undertake a four-year Bachelor of Education Course consisting of approximately 1500 hours of formal instruction. This incorporates a number of pedagogies and disciplines, combined with approximately one hundred days of supervised practicum experience in a range of school settings. Secondly, students can undertake a four-year Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Teaching combined degree course with an equal focus on discipline and professional studies. Finally, students can undertake three years of a discipline study (eg. Bachelor of Arts) followed by a two year Post Graduate Bachelor of Education. Each of these courses requires student teachers to spend approximately 210 hours in schools undertaking the practicum as part of their teacher training.

The structure of the practicum in each of the teacher-training courses at ACU is detailed in Table 1:1

Table 1.1 Structure of the Practicum - ACU Teacher-training Courses.

Bachelor of Education (Undergraduate)				
Year	Semester	Unit code	Length	Hours
2	1	EDFX302	10 days	70
2	2	EDFX302	15 days	105
3	1	EDFX302	15 days	105

3	2	EDFX302	20 days	140
4	1	EDFX404	10 days	70
4	2	EDFX404	30 days	210

Bachelor of Education (Postgraduate)				
Year	Semester	Unit code	Length	Hours
1	1	EDFX302	5 days	35
1	2	EDFX302	15 days	105
2	1	EDFX404	20 days	140
2	2	EDFX404	30 days	210

Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education (Teaching Course)				
Year	Semester	Unit code	Length	Hours
2	1	EDFX202	10 days	70
2	2	EDFX202	15 days	105
3	1	EDFX302	15 days	105
3	2	EDFX302	20 days	140
4	1	EDFX404	10 days	70
4	2	EDFX404	30 days	210

From 1991, the practicum program at Australian Catholic University (Victoria) has operated across three campuses. The practicum is directed by the Assistant Head of School (Professional Experience) who is also a member of the School Executive in the Faculty of Education. A Coordinator of Professional Experience is responsible for the organization of the practicum program. Specialist teaching staff are appointed to teach in this program. They provide input into the academic content, and the development, implementation and management of the practicum (ACU National Organization of Field Experience, 2005). A supervisory method termed 'Focussed Supervision' was introduced as a component of the partnership system (Whitelaw, 1993). This method of supervision was reinforced through programs of professional development offered to supervising teachers in schools by the

university. It is further discussed in the literature review which is provided in the following chapter of this thesis.

The Extended Practicum in Primary Pre-service Courses at ACU, Melbourne

In 1996 the practicum (formerly known as the Field Experience Program) at ACU (Melbourne) was reviewed. In 1998 the extended practicum was introduced to meet a range of changing educational needs. The University of Melbourne introduced this model into their teacher education program in the early 1990s and several other institutions including ACU (Sydney) adopted similar models in the mid 1990s. This practicum differed from earlier practicum models in that it was over an extended period of eight weeks. Sullivan (2004) (personal correspondence) explained the rationale for this change at ACU Melbourne in that “it was not possible for student teachers to find their feet in schools and gain insights and understandings about school culture and schools as workplaces in a 3-4 week placement”. Subsequently, the extended practicum was introduced “to extend the opportunity to enable students to gain deeper insights into schools as workplaces, and see how they managed different contextual factors [and] ...to assist student teachers to make better links between theory and practice” (Sullivan, personal correspondence, 2004).

The overarching aims of the extended practicum are to provide primary pre-service teachers with a substantial block of professional experience that more closely approximates the realities of everyday teaching; to extend primary pre-service teachers’ repertoire of pedagogical skills in the planning and delivery of appropriate teaching and learning programs and to develop primary pre-service teachers’ appreciation of the teachers’ role within the school and broader educational community (ACU National, Unit Outline, Professional Experience 4. 2006, p. 13).

At ACU Melbourne, the extended practicum is the final component of the professional studies program. Undergraduate students undertake it in their 4th and final

year and post-graduates in their 2nd and final year. While the practical (school-based) experience is in two blocks, they are both taken in the same school, with the same teacher, and in the same class. The overall structure of the extended practicum is:

2 weeks - Observation, preparation and initial teaching (in schools)

Semester break (approximately 6 weeks)

3 weeks - Academic program (at university)

6 weeks - Teaching practice (in schools)

5 weeks - Academic program (at university)

A feature of the extended practicum is that the academic units are closely linked to the work to be undertaken in schools during the teaching practice. Assignment tasks for these units are planned to ensure that students make these links. These units linked to the extended practicum are:

Teaching & Classroom Management 1

English Education 2

Maths Education

Catholic Education and Schooling

Children with Special Needs

During the extended practicum students undertake a defined set of graded teaching tasks that are supervised by an experienced teacher. “This phase provides the pre-service teacher with an opportunity to take prolonged responsibility for the progress of a grade and to incorporate sensitivities and skills into developing a personal teaching style. The pre-service teacher should assume the major responsibility for planning and teaching during these weeks” (ACU Professional Experience Guideline Booklet, p. 5. 2006).

The stated objectives of the six-week teaching block of the extended practicum are:

1. To assume independence in preparing and planning curriculum programs and sequenced units of work.

2. To refine classroom organisation, management and teaching practices.

3. To develop a deeper sense of professional responsibility and commitment.

4. To utilise self-evaluation techniques as a means of refining practice.

5. To utilise effective assessment and reporting strategies.

6. To prepare student teachers for successful induction into full time teaching.

To achieve these objectives, the student teacher is required to complete the following tasks:

(a) teaching single/consecutive lessons

(b) planning and teaching half day sessions

(c) planning and teaching full day sessions

(d) planning and teaching curriculum sequences/units of work

(e) four weeks of full control (this may include team teaching with the supervising teacher or shared program organisation where the student teacher is the major contributor to the planning and implementation of the program (ACU, Professional Experience Guideline Booklet, p. 5, 2006).

Between 2000 and 2005 ACU National made significant changes to the supervision and assessment practices of students undertaking the extended practicum. These changes include that there are no visits to schools, or critiquing of lessons by university staff. In conjunction with university staff a provisional grade is given by the supervising teacher at the “mid round review” for the final assessment grade of student teachers. However, if a student is deemed at risk of failure, university staff will visit the school and provide assistance to the student and support to the school, and also view a lesson prepared and taught by the student teacher. The school experience coordinator, supervising teacher and university lecturer discuss the final grade, (either a pass or fail) however it is the university

that makes the final decision. Assessment for academic units is based on a combination of school-based tasks, assignments and a final examination. The lecturer in charge of each of the units awards the final mark for each unit. Students are required to pass all academic units and the teaching component in order to pass the extended practicum.

The extended practicum is an important component of primary pre-service teacher education at ACU National Melbourne campus. It integrates the work undertaken in the academic units with teaching practice in schools and it introduces “the pre-service teacher to the responsibilities of a beginning teacher and to school life within the context of a fully participating staff member” (ACU, Professional Experience Guideline Booklet, p. 2).

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the development of primary teacher education programs in Australia. It has outlined the early ‘apprenticeship’ system of initial teacher education and discussed the development and amalgamation of teacher training colleges and universities. A range of Government Reports and Inquiries has been examined and the period of the 1960s to 1980s has been analysed as one of particular significance for Australian teacher education. The historical development of teacher education in Catholic schools and the development of the extended practicum at ACU National, Melbourne campus have been outlined. Finally the history, structure and function of the extended practicum in primary pre-service degrees, the focus of this study, has been identified and discussed.

This thesis so far has provided an introduction to the problem and describes the context of the research. The following chapter reviews the literature relevant to this study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Practicum

Introduction

To frame, inform and justify the research questions which are the focus of the research reported in this thesis, this literature review focuses on three major areas: a) the role and purpose of the practicum b) the relationships that influence the practicum, and c) the effectiveness of the practicum.

Research on the practicum in Australia and beyond is vast, so the boundaries of this literature reviewed were determined by the research questions. Generally, only Australian literature has been included as it had the most potential to illuminate the research questions. The literature reviewed in this chapter is predominantly selected from between 2000 and 2006 to ensure that the discussion is current.

Defining the Practicum

One of the key aims of initial teacher education is to prepare teachers for competence in classroom practice. Field experience is one component of teacher education, the others being foundation studies and electives studies (Elligate, 2004a). While there are over 35 schools of teacher education in Australia there are significant differences among them (Murray-Harvey, Silins, & Saebel, 1999), however, they all incorporate a practical teaching component within their initial teacher education programs. A variety of terms are used when referring to this practical teaching component. These terms include; field experience; practical experience;

practicum; professional experience; field studies, and internships (Brown, Martinez, Tromans & White, 2002), or more colloquially ‘teaching rounds’ or ‘school experience’. In this thesis, the term ‘practicum’ is used to refer to this learning experience.

Many authors have sought to define the practicum. Boyd and Gross, (2001, p. 2) suggested that the practicum provides “learning experiences which seek to give students opportunities to experience practitioners’ roles and responsibilities, reflect on and make sense of personal experiences and develop professional competencies”. The Parliament of Victoria Education and Training Committee, (PVETC) (2005) similarly defined the practicum as:

...a period of time spent in schools where the prime focus for the trainee teacher is to practise teaching under the supervision of a mentor who should be trained for this role- to spend time with teachers and classes, observing, teaching small groups and whole classes, and undertaking the range of tasks that make up the teacher’s role including planning, assessing and reporting (p. 141).

Ferrier-Kerr (2003) recognised the role of the supervisory relationship, defining the practicum as the development of effective professional relationships between supervising and student teachers, which support their professional development in schools. Furthermore, the practicum provides opportunities for students to practise their teaching skills and understand the role of the teacher under the supervision of an experienced professional. The practicum can be identified around four major themes, namely, personal connectedness, collaboration, role interpretation and styles of supervision (Ferrier-Kerr, 2003). However it is defined, the practicum has been long recognised as a fundamental and critical aspect of initial teacher education (Brown & Lancaster, 2004; Brown, Martinez, Tromans & White, 2002).

Purposes of the Practicum

Pre-service teachers regard the practicum as one of the most critical and challenging aspects of their course (Lugton, 2000; Ramsey, 2000). This is because it is undertaken in a range of school and community settings, and exposes student teachers to a diversity of classes, and teaching and learning programs (Broadbent, 2005; Cooper & Jasmine, 2002; Leminer, 2001; Ling, 2001). Both educators and students acknowledge the importance of the practicum to student learning (Khamis, 1996; Martinez, 1998; PVETC, 2005). In a study of the perceptions of changes to the practicum, first year trainee teachers indicated that the practicum was the most important and enjoyable part of their pre-service training (Brandenburg & Ryan, 2002; PVETC, 2005).

The PVETC (2005) stated that “the practicum is the most effective means of preparing pre-service teachers to teach the curriculum... to prepare them for assessment, reporting and administrative responsibilities, and for the human relations dimensions required for developing relationships with students, colleagues and parents” (p. 139). Whitelaw (1993, p. 1) quoted Copeland who stated that the role of the practicum was “to educate the novice teacher so that they acquire both the teaching capabilities necessary to begin teaching and the aptitudes for learning to teach”. During the practicum student teachers undertake a wide range of academic and professional activities (Brandenburg & Ryan, 2002) and experience a range of competencies related to working in a primary school environment (Brown, et al, 2002). These include:

opportunities to apply and develop classroom learning or theoretical concepts in work settings; opportunities to clarify or determine career directions; opportunities to identify and utilise the generic skills they are developing as a result of being a university student in a work setting; opportunities to become

‘work literate’ and to establish contacts and gain experience in the workforce (Orrell, Cooper & Jones, 1999, p. 5).

One of the major roles of the practicum is for student teachers to develop teaching skills and strategies and to apply them to a range of educational settings (Australian Teacher Education Association [ATEA], 2002; Charles & Charles, 2004; Dawson, 1998; Fairbanks, Freedman & Kahn, 2000). These skills include; teaching strategies (for example, group work, cooperative learning, questioning techniques), behaviour management (for example, rules and routines, strategies, rewards and consequences and motivation), teaching techniques (for example, closure strategies, assigning work, feedback, assessment), lesson content (for example, the nature, level and quality of content of lessons) planning for teaching (for example consideration of current work program and timetable) and formal assessment and evaluation procedures (ACU Professional Experience Guideline Booklet, 2006; Ingvarson, Beavis & Kleinhenz, 2004).

Teaching is an intellectual pursuit in which teachers need to integrate theory and practice, therefore, students need a sound theoretical foundation on which to base their thinking and practice in the classroom (Lieberman & Miller, 1999). The practicum provides students with the opportunity to engage in an ongoing process of connecting theory to practice and vice versa, examining how they differ and how they are the same (Groundwater-Smith, 2002; Orrell, 2001). Ideally it provides the opportunity for pedagogical theory to be simultaneously taught, effectively absorbed, and put into practice (PVETC, 2005). Eyers (2005) recognised,

the practicum provides a flexible linkage and focus across the three learning domains in the teacher preparation programs at the higher education level – content, knowledge (colloquially, the ‘what to teach’ component within a liberal education), professional knowledge (‘what to know about schooling, schools and the people in them’) and the knowledge and skills

needed to function as capable and caring professionals in those schools', (sometimes called the 'how to teach' part). While much of the activity in the practicum relates to the third domain, it serves to integrate and bring practical life to the others. It is a critically important part of initial teacher education (p. 2).

The practicum provides a basis for student teachers to develop their professional identity (Groundwater-Smith, 2002; Groundwater-Smith, Cusworth & Dobbins, 1998; McCarthy, 1996). This includes; feeling confident with their teaching, sharing reflections, and being comfortable with and accountable for their teaching role (Gardner & Williamson, 2002). It also provides students with opportunities to complement their professional skills with their personal skills. It allows student teachers to develop a sense of awareness and confidence that helps them to deal with social and emotional experiences in a range of educational settings (Groundwater-Smith, 2002; Oxley, Howard & Johnson, 1999). It is through the practicum that student teachers can begin to develop a personal philosophy, knowledge, understanding and enthusiasm for the teaching profession (Broadbent, 2005).

Learning to be a teacher means being able to understand and engage with a wider community other than the classroom. Through the practicum students develop an awareness of workplace culture, appreciate the complex demands of working within a multifaceted organization, engage with a diverse group of professionals, and learn how to communicate professionally (Orrell, 2001). The ability of pre-service teachers to think independently, understand the importance of life long learning and become a more reflective practitioner are additional skills to be learned during their time in schools (Martinez & Mackay, 2002). It has been suggested that there is a connectedness between the quality of the practicum and commitment to the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In a study reviewing changes to a practicum, students stated that it helped "them to confirm their career choice,

understand and make connections with learning and acted as an incentive to remain in their course” (Brandenburg & Ryan, 2001, p. 7).

Experienced practitioners suggest that the practicum should prepare student teachers for full time teaching, and provide them with opportunities to consolidate their professional competencies (Gore, 2004; Shulman, (2000). The practicum provides student teachers with a range of teaching and learning experiences under the supervision of experienced teachers and across many settings. Bates (2002) states:

the practicum encourages students to develop materials which document curricular, pedagogical and assessment practices in ways which illustrate the diversity of practice and open it up for analysis in its relationships to social, cultural and economic contexts and subject it to evaluation (p. 8).

Groundwater- Smith; Deer; Sharp & March (1996) state that “teaching and learning to teach should need to be conceived as lifelong processes which exist on a continuum” (p. 40). Furthermore, Healy (2003) states that “teachers with a much broader range of skills and sensibilities necessary to deal with complexities of the epoch are needed” (p. 40).

Developing the Practicum for the Twenty-first Century

Currently, Australian education is challenged to meet the increasing demands of a multifaceted and diverse society (Smith & Cusworth, 1996). This includes competencies to address “a multitude of problematic issues, interpersonal relationships, special needs of individual students, a diverse range of teaching and learning programs, and classroom management issues” (McInerney & McInerney, 2002 p. 10).

The nature and progress of work undertaken in schools and universities is fundamental in preparing young people to be citizens of the future. Hunter, Tinning & McCuaig (2006) state:

in Australia at the present time our educational system is charged with the task of educating for a clever country in which future citizens are lifelong learners, multi-skilled, competent with information technology, literate, numerate and able to speak a language other than English in order to play a productive part in a globalised economy (p. 3).

For teachers to work successfully in classrooms in the future, present teacher education programs need to be revitalised and reconstructed (Brown et al, 2002). Skillbeck and Connell, (2004) argue that during the next decade the teaching profession in Australia will be transformed. It will need to be more accountable to address the demands of economic constraints and academic change (Goodfellow & Sumsion, 2000). Additionally age related retirements will result in a massive turnover of teachers and an influx of new beginning teachers (Goodfellow & Sumison, 2000; Skillbeck & Connell, 2004).

At the same time, it can be expected that there will be “more exacting requirements and expectations of new teachers as new professional standards are set to meet the challenges of the knowledge society” (Skillbeck & Connell, 2004, p. 4). The importance of these demands on pre-service teacher education accreditation in the twenty-first century has been recognised by the Parliament of Victoria Education and Training Committee’s (PVETP) Report (2005) and its recommendations to the VIT. Their report, “Step Up, Step In, Step Out” emphasised the importance of the practicum within teacher-education courses, and argued that the VIT should hold education faculties accountable for producing ‘teacher-ready graduates’. Recommendations of this report focused on; selection of students into courses, flexible program design and delivery, content of courses, the practicum, information and

communication technologies, accountability, induction and mentoring (p. 3). This inquiry into the suitability of pre- service teacher training in Victoria identified “that achieving the right balance between the theoretical and practical components of teacher education is one of the most important challenges currently facing those involved in the design, delivery and accreditation of teacher education” (PVETC, 2005, p. 12).

While teacher-education continues to rely on traditional models, it does not address the changing demands of education. The practicum’s “lack of theory and structure and its over dependence on an outmoded apprenticeship model”, supports this concern (Cooper, 1995 p. 593). The Committee for the Review of Teacher Education [CRTE] (2003) suggested that initial teacher training would benefit from improving the quality of the school experience component of the curriculum, however, while there have been some changes the literature suggests that the rhetoric of change to the practicum is thus far greater than the evidence of actual change in practice (Fullan, 2000). Therefore, it is important that teacher education programs prepare teachers for the future complexities of teaching in the twenty-first century (Zajda, 2000).

Thus the practicum is an integral component of teacher education. Hoban (2005) states that the “quality of student learning in schools and the quality of professional learning in universities shares much common ground” (p. 150). It is critical that teacher educators are familiar with the structure of the pre-service practicum both in schools and universities and should continually complement each other. Hoban et al, (2005) state that “research perspectives on conceptual change and self - directed learning have major implications for how we teach” (p. 151).

The first section of this literature review has discussed the role and changing nature of the practicum. The term practicum used in this thesis incorporates the terms: field experience, practical experience, professional studies and internships. The definitions and roles of the practicum have been identified and discussed. These roles include facilitating student teachers to develop a range of classroom skills, professional competencies and opportunities to translate theory into practice in a range of classroom settings. While there have been recent changes to teacher education, the literature suggests that there need to be further changes to both teacher education programs and the practicum that address the many challenges of the twenty-first century.

Models of the Practicum

Historically, the practicum evolved from the “apprenticeship system” of teacher training which saw trainee teachers placed under the supervision and control of more experienced teachers. Often these supervising teachers were members of the clergy or of religious orders, parents or those who had some formal qualifications or experience in teacher education. They were responsible for the supervision, assessment, placement and promotion of students during and following their teacher training. State, denominational and independent education bodies continued to provide teacher training until the late 1940’s when, following World War 2, the practicum essentially became the responsibility of training colleges and universities. In this model of teacher training the above named organisations became responsible for the training and placement of student teachers. At this time students were able to undertake the practicum in metropolitan, country and rural schools.

Following the amalgamation of Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE’S) education and in particular, the practicum took a more dynamic approach within the framework of teacher

education. This new approach was the result of the Ramsey Review (2000) into the state of teacher education in New South Wales. This report recommended that ‘time in schools should become the focus of teacher education and that university courses should be more coherent by integrating their subjects’ (p. 57). Hoban (2004) states:

teacher education design should reflect a four dimensional approach which links across the university based curriculum; links between schools and university experiences; socio – cultural links between participants; and personal links that shape the identity of teacher educators (p. 117).

The implementation of the Extended Practicum in 1998 at ACU (Melbourne) focused on making the practicum more rigorous and accountable from a university, student and school perspective. This practicum model encouraged the university and its affiliated training schools to work collaboratively and in a way that demonstrated an increase in their connectedness. The significance of the Extended Practicum is reflected in the increased amount of time that students spend in schools. Three block placements of (1x2), 1x3) and (1x6) weeks’ duration enable students to integrate their curriculum content and teaching practices learned at the university with their teaching and learning in schools. One of the most important features of this program is that the total responsibility for students undertaking the practicum lies with the school, although the university is responsible for awarding the final assessment grade in conjunction with the schools.

Partnerships in Teacher Education

The following section of this chapter discusses the role of partnerships in teacher education. It reviews the way partnerships have developed, and their importance in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Models of teaching supervision and current challenges of partnerships are examined. The nature of supervision and partnership practices are incorporated into this review, as these are two major features of the practicum that are considered significant to the success of teacher education programs within Australian Catholic University, the university that is the site of the research reported in this thesis.

While the academic knowledge students acquire during their course is important, teaching practice in schools allows student teachers to develop their teaching skills and strategies (Brady, Segal, Bamford & Deer, 1998). The way in which these experiences are managed or supervised is critical to the success of learning. The supervision of students during their practicum is based on a series of partnerships between the key stakeholders that recognises and respects the rights, responsibilities, expertise, perspectives and interests of the parties. It should encompass all elements of the initial teacher education program (ACDE, 1998; Carter, 2001). The school-university literature also uses the terms collaboration, cooperation and partnership to describe their relationship (Scanlon, 2004), however, this study uses the term 'partnership' as it is the term currently used by educationalists. A partnership is a relationship in which the interests of two parties are equally managed and when they work together to satisfy their needs (McBurney-Fry, 2002). This partnership is therefore one of joint enterprise in which both parties are committed to making different but complementary contributions to the extended practicum.

In the context of teacher training, partnerships may be between individuals, including teachers, students and university staff, or between organizations such as the schools and the

university (Elligate, 2004b). Wilson and Klein, (2000) contended that the partnership between students and supervising teachers is the central core of education, where significant learning takes place. In particular, during the practicum, the supervising teacher is a key partner in assisting student teachers in the development and management of classroom and curriculum techniques (Battersby & Ramsey, 1990). As a crucial component of teaching practice, these partnerships have received significant focus within teacher education programs and teacher education research.

Partnerships are an integral component of pre-service teacher education programs. Effective supervision can help student teachers bridge the gap between theory and practice, and can support the development of teaching skills and professional competencies of students through ongoing discussions, feedback and support programs. Partnerships also enable a sharing of knowledge that allows students to learn about effective teaching practice (Goodlad, 1990). In this context learning is an encompassing term that “intrinsicly motivates all partners involved in partnerships and aims to facilitate student learning through stimulation in practical settings” (Toomey, Chapman, Gaff, McGilp, Walsh, Warren & Williams, 2005, p. 34). While partnerships play an important role in teacher education, “there is a need for development of more genuine partnerships between academics, teachers and student teachers during the process of professional preparation” (Ethell & McMeniman, 2000, p. 3). Other literature strongly supports this need (Brandenburg & Ryan, 2001; Ling, 2001; PVETC, 2005; Ramsey, 2000). This suggests that partnerships may not be as effective or as collaborative as the literature indicates.

History of Partnerships in Teacher Education

In developing an understanding of the term “partnerships”, and why they have become important in teacher training, it is necessary to briefly discuss their historical development. During the 1950’s and 1960’s, many primary teacher education courses became full-time. The curriculum during this time was developed by the Education Department while district inspectors were responsible for its implementation. This provided the original partnerships between schools and teacher training colleges. Often former teachers were employed as teacher educators in the tertiary sector resulting in further useful relationships being developed between schools and tertiary institutions (Kenny, 1996). At this time teachers’ colleges used a traditional model for the preparation of students undertaking teaching as a profession. They taught theoretical concepts of teaching in which students learnt their craft in the schools, practising under the supervision of experienced teachers. Teacher training institutes predominantly controlled the practical component of teacher education with limited input from schools however the assessment of student teachers was the responsibility of visiting college lecturers (Dawson, 1998).

In the 1990’s schools undertook a greater role in the education and assessment of student teachers. Universities recognised that supervising teachers were well placed and competent to undertake the roles and responsibilities of supervising student teachers undertaking the practicum. This was the beginning of increased collaboration and respect between the two groups (Knight, Lingard, & Bartlett, 1994). However, these relationships between schools and universities often separated these two groups, with one group operating in such a way that they were seen to be superior to the other. This resulted in teachers often being viewed as subservient to university staff (Dawson, 1998).

More recently, partnership arrangements between universities and schools have been characterised by a changing pattern in their relationships. Toomey, et al (2005) stated “faculties of education are increasingly constructing relationships with schools designed to serve the professional development needs of teachers in their partnership schools” (pp. 23-24). These relationships, which challenge the traditional role of the supervisor, reflect a reconceptualisation of professional practice that is more focussed on communication and conversations (Eckersely, Walta, Walker, Davis, Smith & Newton, 2001). However, universities continue to take a key role in this process. Universities award the final assessment mark to students and are responsible for the development and implementation of specific curriculum programs including the extended practicum (Dawson, 1999). This suggests that although partnerships between schools and the university have improved they are still not equitable.

Partnerships Operating in the Practicum

Teacher education needs a way of working which encourages consultation and collaboration between the key stakeholders (Turnbull, 2002). Such partnerships present a complex aspect of professional practice that requires ongoing collaboration to ensure that those who are involved perform at a consistently high level.

Within the teacher education program two forms of partnerships are recognised. The first partnership, the focussed model of supervision, is undertaken between the school supervisor(s) and student teacher. This partnership involves the collaboration between the professional experience coordinator, (the teacher in the schools who manages the practicum) and the supervising teacher (who is responsible for the classroom supervision) and student teacher. The second partnership is between the school where the student is placed and the university.

The major focus of the teacher-student partnership centres on facilitating the development of the students' teaching skills and strategies in the classroom. It uses 'focused observation' "to supervise a student's formally planned teaching" (ACU Focussed Supervision Method, 2000, p. 2). This method of partnership incorporates a four-step approach to supervising students: modelling, coaching, discussion and supervision. It recognises the role that the supervising teacher plays as well as the amount of time spent with the student teacher. An effective professional relationship or partnership between the supervising and student teacher is an integral component of the practicum (Ferrier-Kerr, 2000). This partnership should be characterised by collegiality, openness and a mutual respect that encourages and nurtures personal growth, as well as facilitating professional teaching and learning (Turnbull, 2002).

The second form of partnership within this supervision model is that which operates between placement schools and the university. This form of partnership has undergone significant change in that the practical expertise of school personnel is being recognised increasingly (Cartwright, 2000; Dawson, 2004; Turnbull, 2002) and the relationship between university and schools has moved from one of conflict to collaboration (Turnbull, 2002). In this partnership, the university supervisor is regarded more as a facilitator and advisor both to the supervising and student teacher. The task of assessing the student is the responsibility of the school however the final assessment is the responsibility of the university. While tertiary institutions and schools have displayed significant advances in the formation and implementation of effective partnerships, in many ways they continue to be insufficiently connected (Ramsey, 2000).

The foregoing discussion has identified the role of partnerships in supervising students undertaking the practicum. It described how the concept of partnerships developed, and

identified two forms of partnerships used in the supervisory process; the student-supervising teacher partnership and the university-school partnership. The uneasy relationship between schools and universities has been identified in the literature as one of the major challenges facing the practicum. The following section of this chapter discusses this challenge in greater detail and elaborates on other problems facing the practicum.

Effectiveness and Problems of the Practicum

The practicum aims to facilitate the development of student skills, knowledge, professional relationships and independent learning (Ramsey, 2000; PVETC, 2005). It provides links between schools and universities and reflects the objectives of VIT, the body that regulates the teaching profession in Victoria. Recent government reviews have been undertaken in response to the changing demands of schools, employer teaching authorities and the wider education community to improve best practice in teacher education. Some of these reviews suggest that for student teachers to work successfully in classrooms in the twenty-first century present teacher education programs need to be revitalised and reconstructed (ACDE, 2004; Brown et al, 2002; Ramsey, 2000).

The Ramsey Review into teacher education placed the practicum “at the centre of pre-service teacher education” (p. 3). However, this Report (2000) questioned the strength and achievements of past reviews of teacher education noting that they had failed to raise the status of teacher training and the quality of teacher education in both schools and universities. Furthermore, it stated that the range of practicum experiences provided for student teachers was often narrow, failed to expose them to a diversity of teaching experiences and identified a

number of problems relating to the practicum (Ramsey, 2000). The Parliament of Victoria Education and Training Committee (PVETC) (2005) review of teacher education also highlighted problems with the practicum and made a number of recommendations to improve it. Martinez (1998, cited in Turnbull, 2002) suggested “that aspects of the practicum that require critical examination include: criteria for selection for supervisors, curriculum of the practicum, communication in supervision, support and evaluation, issues of authority and power, and preparation for all involved (p. 36).

The following section identifies and critically reviews problems identified in the literature that are facing the practicum. These problems include: the role of partnerships, quality of supervision, commitment of university staff, administrative problems, availability of competent teachers to supervise students, links between theory and practice, structure, timing and length of the practicum, preparation for the practicum and student stresses.

Partnerships between Schools and the University

One of the most significant influences on the practicum is the way universities work with schools where the students undertake the practicum. While stakeholders recognise the value of cooperation between schools and universities, as discussed earlier this has not always been the case. Ramsey, (2000) believes that teacher education and schools are insufficiently connected. Ideally, the practicum should view teacher educators and experienced teachers partnering each other in supporting and supervising student teachers. However, in reality this is seldom the case (Lugton, 2000). Carter (2001) stated “that the role of supervisors their responsibilities and the nature and forms of communication between university supervisor, school cooperating teacher and student teacher, appear to be central to feelings of isolation and disconnectedness

encountered by student teachers engaged on field experience in schools” (p. 1). Thus, problems in the school-university partnership impact directly on the quality of student learning during the practicum.

Traditionally, there has existed a marked difference in culture between universities and schools with each having their own agendas and demands, thus, the relationship between the school and university is marked by potential for conflict and contestation (Martinez, 1998). Martinez (1998) argued that while “pre-service teachers regard the supervision as crucial, school and university supervisors see it as peripheral to their core work (p. 292). “Schools continue (rightly) to see classroom learners as their first responsibility, with their role as teacher educators a side-event even for the most committed” (Martinez & Mackay, 2002, p. 16), whereas universities consider school supervision as an extra, time-consuming activity, on top of academic work. These differing commitments of time and priority present major barriers in relationships between supervisors and students (Martinez, 1998; Scanlon, 2004). The relationship between supervising teachers and tertiary staff is complex with the latter often engaged in establishing a relationship based on power (Cervero & Wilson, 2001). While one of the roles of the university supervisor is to make connections between the school and the university, Zeichner (1990) argued that the practicum generally was characterised by student teachers being allocated to a supervising teacher with short, ill-timed and infrequent visits from the university supervisor. This situation has often resulted in tension between schools and the university (Collins, 1998; Groundwater-Smith, 2002).

These problems are due largely to the increased demands on both schools and universities. Increased student numbers, more academic staff responsibilities and pressures of funding, time and resources for staff in universities have impacted significantly on their

availability to supervise students in schools (Ewing & Smith, 2000). In recent times, the nature of supervision has changed significantly resulting in university staff being unavailable to visit students for all periods of professional experience. Reduced budgets for education have also impacted on the provision of induction programs, supervisory workshops and knowledge sharing between universities and schools (Elligate, 2004b; Martinez & Mackay, 2002; PVETC, 2005; Vick, 2006). Similarly, as teachers need to focus on developing the potential of their students, manage continuing reforms in education and address increased accountability, they are less willing to take on the additional responsibility of supervising pre-service teachers (Ingvarson, 2005; Kennedy & Dorman, 2002; Martinez & Mackay, 2002; Russell & Carpenter, 2002).

A further issue that exists between schools and the university is that communication relating to the practicum is limited, with less focus on the requirements of the supervisory process. Often dialogue is about ensuring that adequate places are available for students. As a result, the roles and responsibilities and expectations of supervisors in schools are frequently unclear (Carter, 2001; Ryan & Brandenburg, 2002). While “schools and other practicum sites should be well informed about the professional experience program, few universities have solved the problem as to how this can be done” (Groundwater-Smith, (2002, p. 7). Thus, the level of support and information provided by universities for practicum coordinators and supervising teachers is often unsatisfactory. Information sessions to inform teachers about the requirements, recent developments and changes to the practicum are not always conducted on a regular basis for school-based personnel, thus supervising teachers often have a limited knowledge of the university-based academic content (Cooper, 1995). Consequently, some supervising teachers fail to support the academic program at the university suggesting that

theory is not considered relevant to the realities of classroom practice. “The university is a very different place from schools in terms of theory...in schools the talk of theory is miles away” (Martinez & Mackay, 2002, p. 14).

For partnerships between schools and universities to be effective it is important that the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the practicum are clearly defined and understood by both parties and high levels of trust and respect are evident (Graham & Thornley, 2000). To be effective, this relationship should be “characterised by an openness and mutual respect” (Turnbull, 2002, p. 22) with a shared responsibility for ongoing collaboration. The quality of the practicum will be enhanced and partnerships between institutions strengthened if both the schools and universities work together in the planning, developing, implementing of the practicum, (Martinez, 1998; Turnbull, 2002; Loughran, 2007)

Availability of Quality Supervising Teachers

The difficulty in finding sufficient teaching placements and ensuring the availability of experienced and appropriate staff to supervise student teachers impacts significantly on effectiveness of the practicum (Martinez, 1998; PVETC (2005, p. xxiii). As the number of education courses seeking placement for students increases the demand for experienced supervising teachers often exceeds their availability (Cartwright, 2002; Elligate, 2004; Martinez, 1998; PVETC, 2005). Ingvarson (2005) found that many universities have difficulty in finding suitable placements for student teachers and teachers who are able and willing to provide quality practicum experiences for students. Many supervising teachers have become overwhelmed with the increasing demands of school responsibilities, thus they have less time and energy to supervise students (Ingvarson, 2005; Kennedy & Dorman, 2002; Martinez &

Mackay, 2002; Russell & Carpenter, 2002). Evaluating students is an added responsibility that many teachers are also unwilling to undertake (Martinez, 2001). Rationalisation of staff responsibilities, retirements and resignations are further issues that have impacted on the availability of experienced and qualified staff to teach and supervise student teachers (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2003). Supervising teachers also find the responsibility and isolation of supervision stressful. “The traditional culture in schools is an individualistic one, characterised by classroom isolation and few opportunities for collaboration and professional interaction” (Dobbins (1997, cited in Hastings & Squires 2002, p. 1). Universities are often unaware of these stresses experienced by school-based teachers (Hastings, 2004).

Not all supervising teachers are well equipped to supervise students. The most critical factor determining what students learn is based on what their supervising teacher knows (Darling-Hammond, 2005 p. 1). Darling-Hammond, (2005) argues that for students to learn effectively during the practicum they need to be in the classroom of an expert teacher. Ingvarson (2005) found that students “made frequent mention of unsatisfactory arrangements, including the selection and preparation of teachers supervising the practicum experience in schools” (p. 1). What makes a good supervising teacher is discussed in the literature. Martinez (1998, pp. 6-7) suggested that a good teacher should be “supportive, warm, friendly, a good role model, give professional advice, accepts mistakes, not pedantic”. Kennedy and Dorman (2002) added that the qualities of an effective supervisor were “friendliness, organization, clarity of expectations, willingness to offer professional advice, positive encouragement, openness in communication as well as a support of the children and other members of the school staff” (p. 9). Thus, an ongoing problem facing teacher education is the availability of

quality school-based supervisors. An associated issue is that while classroom teachers frequently complement their teaching with an understanding of educational theory, it still remains that pre-service teacher education fails to concentrate on both the pedagogical and practical aspects of teaching (Turnbull, 2002; Zeichner, 1990).

Northfield and Gunstone (1997) suggested there is a growing recognition that teacher education programs do not adequately prepare beginning teachers for full time teaching. In addition, they infer that the preparation of teachers is by nature, inadequate and incomplete. Gunstone et.al, (1993) suggested that within the framework of education programs student teachers needs' should be considered through effective pre-service planning and collaboration with their supervisors and peers. The perceptions of student teachers views of teaching are important, while the concept of reflective practice is critical for those students who are learning to teach. Effective partnerships between schools and universities are critical to the development of the practicum. It is important that the practicum is supported collaboratively by teacher educators from both groups, and that their commitment is viewed in the context of "recent reductions in the practicum budget, an intensification of academic work, and the re-conceptualisation of undergraduate courses' (Johnson, 2003, p. 1).

Links between Theory and Practice

Teaching practice should provide opportunities for student teachers to begin to integrate theory and practice (Chapman et al, 2000; Cooper & Orrell, 1997; Harvey, Silens & Saebel, 1999; Ramsey, 2001). However, this link is arguably one of the most contentious issues of teacher education (Brady, Segal, Bamford & Deer, 1998; Khamis, 1996). The disconnection between theory and practice is well documented in the literature on pre-service teacher

education, and is central to current national policy documents (Lugton, 2000; Martinez & Mackay, 2002). Beginning teachers frequently fail to understand the relationship between what they have studied at university and how it can be transformed into effective classroom learning and teaching (Komesaroff & White, 2002). The PVETC (2005) found that “achieving the right balance between the theoretical and practical components of the course to be one of the most important challenges facing those involved in the design, delivery and accreditation of teacher education” (p. xxii). Darling-Hammond (2002) argued that combining theory and practice in teacher education was critical as it is difficult to learn theory in isolation.

Churchill and Williamson (2002) used a questionnaire to investigate how well student teachers were able to draw connections between theory and practice. They found that students rated their ability to link theory to practice across twelve professional standard areas as around the middle of the scale, generally between ‘somewhat’ and ‘well’. They were best able to make links on the dimensions ‘creating safe and supporting environments, commitment to professional practice and support the development of young people’ and least able to make links on the dimensions of ‘contribute to literacy and numeracy development, construct challenging learning experiences and assess and report on student learning’ (pp. 12-13). Churchill and Williamson (2002) suggested this was a ‘relatively modest level’ of connection supporting the contention that the linking of theory and practice was problematic.

However, student teachers may fail to make the link between theory and practice for a number of reasons, including the demands of daily classroom teaching (Graham & Thornley, 2000). Furthermore, pre-service teachers’ ideas about teaching often conflict with the reality they meet in schools and the pedagogical knowledge they acquire during their pre-service teacher education (Leiminer, 2001, p. 2). It is also difficult for students to link theory with

practice during the practicum when lecturers from the university are rarely able to provide feedback about integrating the work during the practicum and the university component of the course (Ingvarson, Beavis & Kleinhenz, 2004). Gray and Renwick's study into the effectiveness of the practicum was summarised in the response of a student teacher, who stated: "my opinion is that teaching is mainly learnt on the job [but] I am having difficulty marrying educational theory with educational practice" (1998, p. 52). Employing authorities that included the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV), the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Association of Independent Schools Victoria (AISV) argued that the linking of theory and practice continues to be an ongoing problem for pre-service teachers and is not effectively addressed during the practicum (PVETC, 2005).

How are Theory and Practice Linked?

There is limited discussion in the literature about how students link theory and practice. Martinez and Mackay (2002) found that using structured activities during the practicum appeared to have created opportunities for students to incorporate knowledge from university into practice in schools. They concluded that explicit connections between university and school knowledge were more likely to occur when university and supervising teachers' supported each others' work, as students "struggle to build bridges between the two worlds in which they must engage and succeed" (p. 15). This suggests that incorporating theory into practice may occur more effectively if practice places theory into a real-life situation and the theory being learned is applied concurrently with teaching practice (Lugton, 2000). This may be achieved through the use of activities and assessments that are well planned and owned by both the university and schools.

Khamis (1996) investigated the extent to which discussion with teachers influenced students' perceptions of the links between theory and practice. In his study students were set a series of tasks related to observations during their teaching practice. These tasks included a written report on the positive strategies they observed and discussion with teachers about their observations. However, while students valued discussions based on specific tasks, overall, they did not have the impact or desired success in helping them link theory to practice. This was due largely to restrictions of time and management placed on supervising teachers, the need for university staff and teachers to communicate in providing effective frameworks for students, and the need of further academic input at the university so as to make the links between theory and practice more appropriate. Butcher and Parker (1996) examined different models of field-based experiences with respect to how theory and practice could be linked. In these models, staff from universities and schools worked collaboratively in cross-curricula teams to provide experiences for students undertaking these school-based experiences. The conceptual and substantive integration of course and fieldwork provided a close linking of theory and practice for students. However, while these experiences were received positively, Butcher and Parker, (1996) suggested that the time and resources needed to successfully implement these types of initiative may not be cost- effective.

Reflection is another way of helping students' link theory with practice. Reflective practice involves "thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline" (Schon, 1996, in Ferraro, 2000, p.2). To enable students to link theory and practice, students must be aware of what, why and how they are teaching and be able to reflect on their teaching (Ewing & Smith, 2002). Reflective practice allows students "to reflect on their knowledge and growing understandings,

on their developing and pedagogical and relationship skills, and on their activities and achievements, receiving support and feedback from their mentor teachers and fellow staff” (Eyers, 2005, p. 8). This reflection can assist students in “understanding the relationship between teaching strategies and pupil outcomes” and can be used to understand the complexities of teaching and learning in classrooms that are interactive, knowledge-based and strategically focused (Cordingley, 1999, p. 1). Teacher educators can use a variety of student-generated resources to facilitate reflection. These resources may include personal histories, dialogue or reflective journals, group discussions, critical incident analysis, or practice portfolios (Ferraro, 2000; Turnbull 2002). Peer reflection on teaching experiences both during and following a practicum is another useful form of reflection. Supervising teachers and students can both use reflective practice to evaluate and review their own performance in teaching (Cordingley, 1999). However, for students to successfully link theory to practice through the use of reflection, constructive feedback and support from the supervising teacher is necessary. Thus, if student teachers are to develop professionally, it is essential that “teacher educators must not only provide appropriate frameworks and approaches to develop critical reflection, but also model critically reflective professional practice” (Turnbull, 2002, p. 59).

Blunden, (2000) argued that bridging the gap between theory and practice continues to be a problem of the practicum. He states that practice “involves teaching in schools, colleges, business and industry (where practice is referred to as training). Theory involves the development of understanding and insight, and is what universities often do well” (p. 2). However, while both theory and practice are agencies for practice, they frequently operate in different physical and cultural surroundings and are not always easily aligned. In universities a collaborative and intellectual style of communication prevails, while in schools students tend to

work with their teachers and supervisors in a more practical and communicative manner.

In conclusion, while structured activities, focussed discussion about specific teaching experiences and reflective practice can be used to help students' link theory to practice, a significant commitment of both time and effort on the part of both teachers and the university, working collaboratively is required to support this linkage

Structure, Timing and Length of the Practicum

While the literature endorses the value of the practicum, concerns have been expressed about the structure and length of training in schools (Moran, Long & Nettle, 2000). The PVETC (2005) stated that 'current time spent in the practicum, as well as the quality of the experience, was largely inadequate' (p. xxiii), and that reflection and the linking of field experiences to practice require a lengthy commitment of time (Le Cornu & White, 2000; Wentworth, Orme & Lynes, 1999). Student teachers have been found to be ill prepared to meet the demands of teaching (Buchanan, 2006; Crowley, 1998). In recent times teacher education programs in Australia have moved from three to four years, with a subsequent increase in the length of the practicum. Pre-service teachers are now undertaking the practicum in earlier years of their course, as well as completing their final practicum at the beginning and during the third term of their fourth year. However, some courses are not providing practical experiences that adequately complement their academic components (PVETC, 2005).

While the practical components of each of the teacher training courses differ, they should conform to the Guidelines for the Evaluation of Education Courses, developed by the former Standards Council of the Teaching Profession. These guidelines include

recommendations related to the length, the timing, the range of teaching experiences and assessment requirements (Ingvarson et al, 2005). Specifically they suggest a minimum of 80 days of supervised teaching practice for each undergraduate. However, not all courses adhere to these requirements. The PVETC (2005) noted:

...this aspect of teacher education is often the least accountable...and that the difficulties some universities seem to experience in placing pre-service teachers in schools may mean that the quality of the experience becomes of secondary importance to some university coordinators, supervisors and lecturers (p. 143).

While students find the combination of practice and coursework at the same time is useful (Buchanan, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2005) the structure and the timing of the practicum often places pressure on them, and this may compromise both their academic work, and the requirements of teaching practice. The pressure of workloads, detailed lesson planning, and balancing a range of personal and school-based demands have made it difficult for students to successfully complete practicum and academic tasks within a specified time frame (Morris & Williamson, 2000; PVETC, 2005). In addition, pressure to complete teaching preparation, undertake teaching and complete assessment tasks means that time to reflect on theoretical frameworks that underpin practice is often significantly reduced.

Traditionally, teaching practice has taken place within the final years of the academic program. This implies that the teaching experience is a culminating rather than a starting point of a new students teachers learning process (Lugton, 2000). Brady, et al, (1998) noted that students, who commenced the practicum at an earlier stage of their teacher training, were made aware earlier of their responsibilities in teaching. This may assist them in confirmation of their career choice. It could be suggested that in a four year course students may have forgotten their theory by the time they undertake teaching practice in schools, making the practicum at the end

of the course less effective in linking theory and practice. Timing is also a problem for students who have external responsibilities. Some students indicated that it was difficult to “strike a balance between the practicum and personal commitments” when undertaking the practicum (Murray-Harvey et al, 1999).

Preparation for the Practicum

The management of the practicum requires preparation by pre-service teachers, supervising staff at schools and universities and the preparation and dissemination of documentation related to the conduct of the practicum. However, not all aspects of this preparation are satisfactory. While the supervision of student teachers requires sophisticated pedagogical understanding, there has been limited induction for both university staff and non-university staff who teach and supervise students in the practicum (Cooper , Lawson & Orrell, 1997).

Students need to know the expectations, responsibilities and tasks relating to the practicum and that they have a thorough grasp and understanding of documentation prior to undertaking the practicum. Turnbull (2002) stated that: “prior to the practicum student teachers need opportunity to learn explicit skills and competences for teaching. They also need reflective skills, communication skills, advocacy skills and a knowledge of procedures for dealing with concerns during the practicum” (p. 32). Prior to the practicum student teachers undertake a series of academic lectures related to skills and knowledge necessary to complete the practicum. During the practicum it is critical that they are provided with feedback and encouragement about their teaching, which encourages them to display further initiative and confidence in the classroom.

Conclusion

In summarising the literature cited in this chapter, a number of key areas have been identified which impact on the practicum. The main purposes of the practicum have been identified. These are for students to develop teaching skills and strategies to integrate theory with practice, to develop a professional identity, to work in larger school environments, to consolidate learning and to confirm their career choice.

The chapter has also emphasised the importance of partnerships in teacher education and outlined their contribution to the practicum. In particular, partnerships between student teachers, schools and the university have been identified. Finally, challenges to the practicum including the effectiveness of partnerships, quality of supervision, commitment of university staff, administrative problems, availability of teachers to supervise students, links between theory and practice, structure, timing and length of the practicum, preparation for the practicum and stresses for student teachers engaged in the practicum have also been identified.

While the key stakeholders (supervising teachers, student teachers and university staff) have demonstrated an ability to work collaboratively, it appears that the structure and management of the extended practicum needs further review. Regular communication, collaboration and feedback between schools and universities involved in the partnership-supervision process needs to be ongoing and improved (Chapman, 2000; Komesaroff & White, 2001). The literature argues a compelling case for restructuring the practicum in a manner that moves from a skills acquisition base to one of an understanding of curriculum and its alignment with the process of learning to teach (Northfield & Gunstone, 1997).

The practicum needs to be continually resourced, valued and promoted across the wider education community, and to include teachers who are willing to share experiences with student teachers and staff in universities. The practicum in the twenty-first century continues to be a significant component of teacher education, influenced by community expectations, accreditation requirements and government policies. These influences will continue to shape the status of the teaching profession as well as the nature and outcomes of teacher education. It is important that the practicum is considered as a process of adaptation in which teacher education needs to be reconceptualized to meet the challenges of preparing students to work in a climate of constant change and unpredictability (Australian Council of Deans of Education, 2000).

The following chapter outlines the research design used in the study. It identifies methodological approaches and discusses the rationale for their selection. It details how, and from whom data was collected and how it was analysed. Against the framework of key points identified and discussed in this literature review, particularly those that highlight the areas in which the practicum needs to be reviewed, the research questions considered in the research reported in the thesis are:

1. How do the key stakeholders (supervising teachers, student teachers, first year teachers and university staff) understand the key purposes of the extended practicum in the undergraduate and post graduate primary pre-service Bachelor of Education degrees at ACU National, School of Education, Melbourne?
2. How do these stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of this extended practicum in assisting primary pre-service student teachers to reflect on, apply and adapt their university learning in schools?

3. Does the extended practicum help student teachers to link theory with practice in the classroom? If so, how does it achieve this? If not, what factors work against this linking of theory with practice?
4. What are the future implications of this data for the continuation of the extended practicum at Australian Catholic University National, School of Education Victoria and in teacher education in general?

CHAPTER THREE

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

This study investigated the effectiveness of the extended practicum in the Bachelor of Education primary pre-service degrees at Australian Catholic University (Trescowthick School of Education, Melbourne) by examining the experiences and reflections of its key stakeholders. These stakeholders were student teachers, supervising teachers in schools, first year teachers and university staff who were responsible for the preparation, planning and assessment of student teachers.

The research was guided by the following questions:

1. How do the key stakeholders (supervising teachers, student teachers, first year teachers and university staff) understand the key purposes of the extended practicum in the undergraduate and postgraduate primary pre-service Bachelor of Education degrees at ACU National, School of Education, Victoria?
2. How do these key stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of this extended practicum in assisting student teachers to apply, reflect on and adapt their university learning in schools?
3. Does the extended practicum help student teachers to link theory with practice in the classroom? If so, how does it achieve this? If not, what factors work against this linking of theory with practice?
4. What are the implications of this data for the continuation of the extended practicum at ACU National, School of Education (Victoria), and in teacher education in general?

This chapter provides an examination and explanation of; a) the epistemology embedded in the study; b) an overview of the theoretical perspectives that informed the methodology, c) the methods used to collect and analyse the data and d) a detailed outline of how the study was conducted.

Blumer, (1969), Creswell, (2003) Crotty (1998) and Larochelle & Bednarz, (1998) have shown the links between epistemology, theoretical perspectives, methodology and methods. The research design for this study, shown in Table 3:1 draws on their distinctions.

Table 3:1 Summary of Research Framework

Epistemology	Theoretical Perspective	Methodology	Methods
• Constructionism	• Symbolic interactionism	• Case study	• Questionnaire • Interviews • Focus groups

Epistemology: Constructionism

The term epistemology is derived from the Greek words “episteme” which means knowledge and “logos” which means logic or rationale (Fisher & Everitt, 1995, p. 2). Hamlyn (1995) suggested that “epistemology deals with the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope and general basis” (p. 42), while Maynard (1994) added that epistemology provides “a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate” (p. 8). Epistemology or a “theory of knowledge” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3) is embedded in the theoretical perspective and methodology that is selected for a research study.

Constructionism was the epistemology that was embedded in this research. Constructionism is the epistemology that most qualitative researchers select in the process of their research. Crotty (1998) explained constructionism in these words: “truth or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered, but constructed” (pp 8-9).

Constructionism declares that knowledge is constructed through personal experience and interaction (Slavin, 2003). It stresses the social nature of learning where students begin with complex problems to solve, and then work out or discover the basic skills required. In this study, participants became meaningfully involved with each other and with researcher through continuous interaction with a range of educational issues. The general design of this study supported a constructionist view of knowledge that is constantly changing due to interpretation, interaction and the development of new interpretations. Constructionism was employed in the research described in this thesis in the use of qualitative data collection and analysis techniques.

Theoretical Perspective: Interpretivism (Symbolic Interactionism)

Symbolic interactionism, an interpretivist perspective, is a way of viewing data from an interpretist paradigm. Merriam (1998) suggested that “symbolic interactions focus on interpretation, but within the context of the larger society; that is, the meaning of an experience is constructed by an individual interacting with other people; meaning is formed as the person intersects with society” (p. 37). It is an adaptation of European phenomenology and is a process that is active, interactive, dynamic, interpretative and reflective (Bowers, 1989; Crotty, 1998).

Interpretivism assumes that “people interpret everyday experiences from the perspective of the meaning it has for them” (Merriam, 1998, p. 37). It “provides a way of exploring the lived-experience - the actuality of experience - from the inside rather than from the natural science perspective of observation and measurement” (Osborne (1994, p. 167). It is concerned with ways in which we view things as a result of our experiences or our consciousness.

This form of research allows the individual to become involved in the study of the direct first person. Consequently, this approach allows the researcher to make use of data based on personal experiences that are provided through interviews and questionnaires. The research reported in this thesis was in part, informed by data provided by participants about issues pertaining to the extended practicum.

Methodology: Case Study

A case study has been defined as “an intensive holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (Merriam, 1998, p. 21) and as “an integrated and bounded system” (Stake 1995, p 2). A case study “focuses on one instance of a particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experience or process occurring in that particular instance” (Denscombe, 2003, p. 32). A case study encourages the researcher to “concentrate on a specific instance or situation and to identify, or attempt to identify, the various interactive processes at work” (Bell, 2000 pp. 10-11).

A case study approach was selected for this research as it allowed for the collection of in depth information from all research participants in a comprehensive way. In particular, it allowed for consideration of both contextual influences and the impact of the complex

relationships between research participants and the organisations they represented. A case study approach has a number of advantages. It “has the strength of utilizing multiple sources to facilitate the depth and the relationships other than the breadth and outcomes of the studied instance. The analysis is holistic rather than based on isolated factors” (Denscombe, 2003, p. 38). It allows a more in-depth focus of the phenomenon being investigated as well as providing a more complete explanation of a particular entity. Case studies also provide a wide range of variables, which allow for interaction between subjects and the content being researched (Merriam, 1998).

This research used a multiple case study that combined six different groups and four different approaches to collecting data. Qualitative and some quantitative methods were used to collect data. These methods were questionnaires, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. This diversity of methods within the case study is shown in Figure 3. 1.

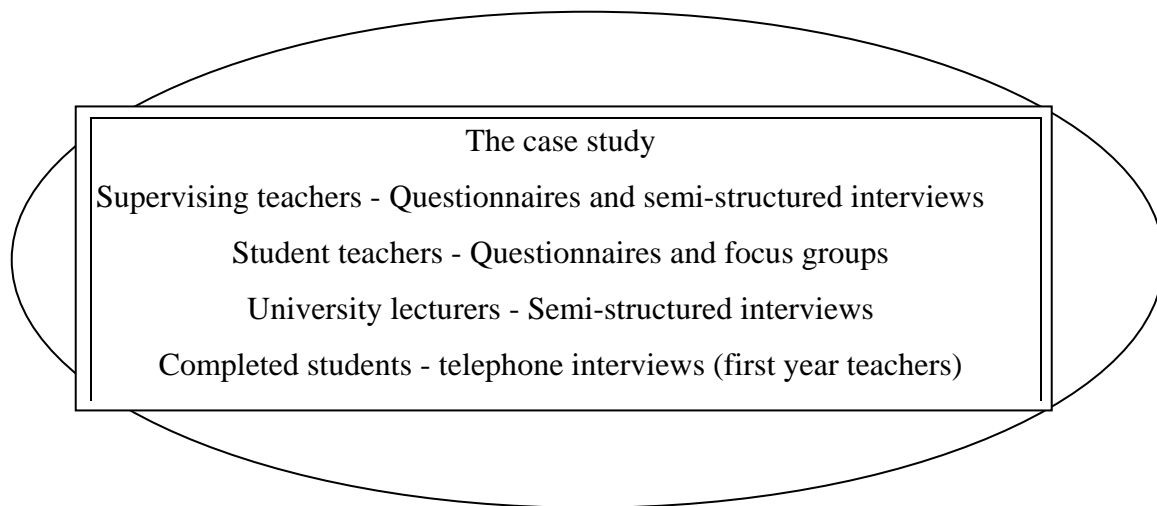


Figure 3:1 Groups and methods within the case study

Qualitative and Quantitative Methods used Together

Qualitative and quantitative methods are used independently and in combination within the context of research studies. While both quantitative and qualitative methods retain their individuality, an approach in which they complement each other has become more apparent in more recent times. It may be that this is largely due to more sophisticated approaches in the availability and use of information technology combined with greater levels of communication in the areas of behavioural and social sciences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

An objectivist paradigm and a positivist theoretical perspective generally support quantitative methods. Objectivism establishes that meaningful reality truly exists as separate from any form of consciousness. Knowledge is objective and able to be verified objectively. This view of “what it means to know” can lead to discovery of objective truth related to a question under study (Crotty, 1998).

Qualitative methods are generally supported by an interpretivist paradigm. This does not mean, however, that “the positivist never uses interviews nor that the interpretivist never uses a survey. They may, however, such methods are complementary, not dominant” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, pp. 8-9). While both approaches are different they can be complementary and used effectively together to generate different, but important and useful information about the same topic. Thus, using both quantitative and qualitative methods ensures that a breadth of information is available to address the research questions.

Qualitative

While quantitative and qualitative methods contribute significantly to educational research, the choice of a particular perspective has implications for the nature of data to be collected and the manner in which an analysis will be undertaken. In this study the researcher chose a more qualitative methodology using limited quantitative methods, because the research was more dependent on gathering and interpreting evidence which reflected the experiences, emotions, and judgments of groups and individuals. Qualitative research was also chosen because it demonstrated more purposeful explanations and meanings of evidence presented by subjects (Verma & Mallick, 1999).

Qualitative methodology is based on the theoretical and methodological principles of interpretive science. Consequently, qualitative analysis contains a minimum quantitative measurement, standardisation and mathematical techniques. Its process brings together a collection and analysis of data in such a way that identification leads automatically to their analysis, which, in turn, directs the area in which data should be sought and identified in order to be analysed continuously (Sarantakos, 1993, p. 298).

“Qualitative methods involve the researcher describing the kinds of characteristics of people and events without comparing events in terms of measurements or amounts” (Thomas, 2003, p. 1). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state:

qualitative research is multi method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them (p. 2).

Quantitative

Quantitative methods collect quantifiable data. These methods allow data to be presented in compact forms, which can be compared with other units by using statistical

techniques (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). In using quantitative methods, it is important that the type of data collected is based on a framework of explicit design that enables the researcher to obtain specific factual data. This approach can use questionnaires, interviews and surveys that require specific information such as age, gender, or geographic location from participants.

Denzin & Lincoln, (1994, p. 4) stated “quantitative methods emphasise the measurement and analysis of casual relationships between variables and may be used to determine the nature of relationships between the variables investigated”. Thomas (2003) adds that “quantitative methods focus attention on measurements and amounts (more or less, larger and smaller, often and seldom, similar and different) of the characteristics displayed by the people and events the researcher studies” (p. 1).

One of the most valuable aspects of using quantitative methods is that the results are more objective, thus more generalisable.

Quantitative researchers seek explanations and predictions that will generalise to other persons and places. Careful sampling strategies and experimental designs are examples of quantitative methods aimed at producing generalisable results. In quantitative research, the researcher’s role is to observe and measure, and care is taken to keep the researchers from contaminating the data through personal involvement with the research subjects. Research objectivism is of utmost concern (Glens & Perkin, 1992, p. 6).

Qualitative methods were used to gain certain data from participants, and the researcher maintained contact with these groups to seek additional information and clarification of data collected. Triangulation occurred through checking the qualitative data between groups in order to identify similar patterns.

Triangulation

Since this case study sought to explore complex and interrelated phenomena from a range of perspectives, a multi-method approach was used. This approach can be beneficial in educational research as overlapping methods can provide complementary information while reducing the possibility of error (Johnston & Christensen, 2000). The use of multiple methods to address the research questions also allows triangulation of the data, thus enhancing the validity of the researcher's findings (Stake, 1995). Triangulation was used in two ways in this study. Firstly, it was used through the use of different data collecting methods and secondly, through seeking perspectives about the same phenomenon of the extended practicum from the three key stakeholder groups. Triangulation enables a researcher to approach a particular issue in a variety of forms. While each may provide slightly contrasting views of an issue, combined they provide a wider and deeper perspective to the research being undertaken and "add considerable value to the research results" (Moore, 2000, p. 13).

Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) defined mixed method studies as: "those that combine the qualitative and quantitative approaches into the research of a single study or multi-phased study" (pp. 17-18). This approach has gained significant growth since the mid 1950's with Brewer & Hunter (1989) noting that, with this growth there is "now virtually no major problem area that is studied exclusively within one method (p. 22).

Brewer and Hunter (1989) add:

the pragmatism of employing multiple research methods to study the same general problem by posing different specific questions has some pragmatic implications for social theory. Rather than being wed to a particular theoretical style.... and it's most compatible method, one might instead combine methods

that would encourage or even require the integration of different theoretical perspectives to interpret the data (p. 74).

Research by Howe (1988) concurs that both quantitative and qualitative methods from a pragmatist view are compatible and could be used at various levels of research. These levels “include data design and analysis, interpretation of results, and epistemological paradigm” (p. 15). The notion of using a mixed methods approach is further supported by Reichardt and Rallis (1994) who contend that both qualitative and quantitative methods are compatible and can form “partnerships” in data collecting.

Preliminary Discussion of two Key Issues that Affected the Research

The role of the researcher

The researcher has been actively involved in the practicum for some three decades. During this time he has been involved in a wide range of areas. These include the assessment of students in metropolitan and country schools, assessment of students who have experienced difficulties with the practicum, responsibility for placement of students in selected international placements, representing the Trescowthick School of Education (Melbourne) at Department of Education (DOE) practicum meetings, jointly responsible for the development of new units in the practicum for new teacher education at ACU, research in the areas of the practicum including the assimilation of pre-service students into the teaching profession during their first year of full time teaching, and mentoring overseas teachers in all facets of the practicum undertaken at ACU. The researcher has also presented regularly at local, state, national and international conferences. This extensive involvement in the practicum from

both a personal and professional perspective has allowed the researcher to ask a specific pre – determined set of questions rather than using more open - ended approaches.

a) “Educational theory” and “educational practice” defined

One of the major challenges facing teacher educators is their ability to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Hughes, 2006). For students undertaking the practicum it is critical that they have a thorough understanding of both these terms as they relate directly to their ability to teach effectively in a range of school settings. Theory relates to the acquisition of knowledge based on exposure to theoretical concepts which allows students to develop particular skills and to understand the relationship between the ideas they are taught and their application in a teaching environment. Conversely, practice involves teachers being able to implement their knowledge gained in educational settings including universities and other teacher training situations into their normal teaching practice undertaken in schools. In terms of effective teaching within the practicum it is important that theory and practice complement each other and support the work undertaken by student teachers. These definitions and the links between them guide the discussion of the analysis of the results of the research.

Methods of Data Collection

As noted earlier, the methodology for this research was a case study approach which used five different groups from the four stakeholder groups, and four different methods of data collection. Self-report questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, telephone interviews, and focus groups were used to collect data. A questionnaire is “a self-report data collection

tool that research participants complete for a specific research project” (Johnston & Christensen, 2000, p. 127). Questionnaires were used as they allowed participants to focus on a range of specific questions and to reflect on issues that were then formally recorded. They also allowed participants to view questions from an individual perspective and to provide data that was accurate and based on their current experiences. The questionnaires used in this study included both open and closed questions to allow for specific information and also encouraged participants to elaborate on their responses.

The purpose of the questionnaires was for the key stakeholders involved in the extended practicum to provide information relating to their perceptions and experiences of the extended practicum. Data gathering was undertaken both in schools and at the university. Questions for each of the key stakeholders involved in the extended practicum (supervising teachers, student teachers and university staff) are outlined in later sections of this chapter.

Questionnaires were distributed to pre-service teachers at a lecture (following the completion of their extended practicum) and to supervising teachers through a mail-out following the extended practicum. These teachers were invited to respond to a range of questions (closed and open) relating to the extended practicum. The researcher conducted interviews (semi-structured) with supervising teachers who agreed to participate in a follow-up interview. The researcher also conducted semi-structured interviews with university staff who taught in the extended practicum, and later telephone interviews with a group of completed students now first year teachers.

This case study collected data from the four stakeholder groups. There were three student groups (40 responded to the questionnaire, 8 participated in the focus groups); ten completed students participated in telephone interviews; two supervising teacher groups (15

responded to the questionnaire, 5 participated in a follow-up semi-structured interview); and seven university staff who participated in semi-structured interviews. Table 3:2 shows the five groups in the case study, the data collection methods used with each group and the number of respondents for each group.

Table 3:2 Overview of Data Collection

Groups	Methodology	Respondents
1 Student teachers	Questionnaires	40
2 Student teachers	Focus groups	8 (2 X 4)
3. Completed student teachers (now first year teachers)	Telephone Interviews	10
4 Supervising teachers	Questionnaires	15
5 Supervising teachers	Semi-structured interviews	5
6 University staff	Semi-structured interviews	7
Total number of respondents		85

Questionnaires

Student questionnaire

To ensure clarity, the student questionnaire, was trialed with a small sample of student teachers, who graduated in May 2003. This helped to ensure that the research questions would provide the information that was required, as well as identifying any ambiguous or poorly constructed questions or any other difficulties associated with the survey. Trialing identified problems that resulted in participants misinterpreting questions, or potential problems with recording and analysing the information (De Vaus, 1990). A research consultant in the Trescowthick School of Education (Victoria) also reviewed the survey questions to ensure they were accurate, unambiguous and could be fully understood by those involved in the study.

All student teachers (158) undertaking the extended practicum in the Trescowthick School of Education (Melbourne) were formally invited to participate in a post placement survey at the completion of an extended practicum lecture. An independent staff member provided student teachers with information relating to completion of this survey and explained that participation was voluntary. The setting for this meeting was a non-threatening and familiar environment. Sufficient time was allowed for student teachers to complete the questionnaire. Forty students completed the questionnaire. Because of this low response rate another group of students who had completed the extended practicum in 2006 and were now first year teachers were subsequently included in the case study. The responses from these first year teachers are discussed in a later section of this chapter.

The majority of these students (40) who completed the initial questionnaire had undertaken their extended practicum in a range of Catholic, state and independent schools in the Melbourne metropolitan area, although a small number of students had been placed in country and regional schools. Questions focused on the student teachers' perceptions and experiences of the extended practicum, including teaching and academic tasks undertaken in schools and at the university. The survey first asked students their gender and age group. The following part of the questionnaire consisted of five (5) questions, three (3) being qualitative, while the remaining two (2) questions were quantitative. The quantitative questions required students to respond on two dimensions. The first question was responded to in four categories, namely; strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The second question required responses in the categories of, not very successful, successful or very successful. The final two questions were open-ended and required the students to make specific comments relating to the extended practicum.

Table 3:3 shows a summary of the 5 questions that were used with the student teachers. A copy of the questionnaire as provided to the students can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 3:3 Summary of Student Teacher Questionnaire

	Questions
Question 1	Was the allocation process undertaken by the professional placement officer at the university satisfactory?
Question 2	How well did lectures prepare you for your practicum placement? (Four dimensions listed.)
Question 3	How successful were you in classroom practice? (Eight aspects of classroom teaching and management listed.)
Question 4	During the extended practicum how did the following personnel assist you? (Supervising teacher, & professional experience coordinator)
Question 5	Do you have any further comments about the extended practicum?

Relationship between the research questions and the students' questionnaire

While question one dealt with the administration of placement issues, questions 2 and 3 were related to research questions 1, 2 and 3 which were concerned with the purposes of the practicum and its effectiveness as an instrument for applying university learning in the school and linking educational theory with practice. Question four was particularly concerned to also investigate the linking of theory and practice, as well as providing some data about the effectiveness of partnerships between the university and schools.

Supervising teacher questionnaire

In 2004, 158 ACU National (Victoria) pre-service primary student teachers were placed in 99 schools (Catholic, state and independent) to undertake their extended practicum. The teachers responsible for the supervision of these student teachers were invited to participate in this research. Each of these 158 teachers was sent a questionnaire to be completed, a letter of

explanation and an informed consent form regarding the research. These can be seen in Appendix 3. Participants were given a three-week time frame to complete and return the surveys and the signed consent form to the researcher in the provided, stamped, return addressed envelope. Despite several follow-up phone calls, only 15 surveys were returned. In the overall context of the research however this has not been viewed as problematic, because of the variety of measures used to collect data from various groups, including the addition of the group of completed students now first year teachers who took part in telephone interviews in a later stage of the research.

The questionnaire first asked teachers to indicate their gender, age range and postcode of their school. The body of the questionnaire consisted of seven (7) questions. While three questions were qualitative and four questions were quantitative, all questions focused on the effectiveness of the extended program from a student, school and university perspective. The questions asked supervising teachers to indicate their views and experiences of the extended practicum.

Table 3:4 shows a summary of the questions to which the supervising teachers were asked to respond. A full copy of the questionnaire is provided in appendix 4.

Table 3:4 Summary of Supervising Teacher Questionnaire

	Question
Question 1	Did you receive documentation from ACU outlining the aims of the extended practicum?
Question 2	What are considered to be the three most (3) important aims of the extended practicum?
Question 3	Did students from ACU (Melbourne) generally understand the responsibilities in relation to the extended practicum in schools?
Question 4	To what extent did student teachers from ACU (Melbourne) translate the theory of teaching into practice in your classroom ?
Question 5	To what extent did student teachers from ACU translate the theory of classroom management into practice in your classroom ?

Question 6	What would you regard as the two (2) greatest strengths of the extended practicum?
Question 7	You are invited to suggest two (2) practical recommendations which will make the extended practicum more effective for student teachers.

Relationship between the research questions and the supervising teachers' questionnaires

Questions 1 and 2 of the questionnaire for supervising teachers specifically related to the first research question which related to the understanding of the purposes of the practicum. Question three was related to research question 2 which sought information on the adaptation of university learning in schools. Questions 4 and 5 were directly related to research question 3 linking theory with practice, while questions 6 and 7 related to the fourth research question concerning implications for the primary, pre-service extended practicum in the local context and beyond.

Following the return of the surveys, the researcher undertook a content analysis of the data. The analysis of grouped data obtained from each question was represented by specific themes emanating from each question. In addition, the data obtained from the surveys provided an overview and consensus of the understandings, perceptions and experiences of supervising teachers involved in supervising student teachers undertaking the extended practicum. Table 3:5 shows the geographical location of the Melbourne schools where supervising teachers taught.

Table 3:5 Location of Schools: Supervising Teachers

POSTCODE	LOCATION
3152	Wantirna
3153	Bayswater
3030	Werribee North & Laverton

3103	Deepline
3058	Coburg East
3192	Somerville
3041	Strathmore
3041	Strathmore
3064	Craigieburn
3152	Wantirna
3170	Mulgrave
3042	Airport West
3019	Braybrook
3015	Newport

Focus Groups

A focus group is a group interview, led by a moderator (on behalf of the researcher) conducted to collect specific data about a specified topic (Litosseliti, 2003, p. 1). Fontana (1994) suggests that a ‘focus group’ is a data collection technique or method, while Bernard (1998) states that focus groups are excellent for getting an indication of how pervasive an idea, value, or behaviour is likely to be in a population, and for understanding how deeply feelings run about products, issues, or public figures (p. 27). Andrews (2003) adds “focus groups allow for an exploration of ideas...through mutually enlightening conversations and are often used as a complement to other data collection methods” (p. 58).

Interviews with the two focus groups were conducted by an academic member of staff employed in the School of Educational Leadership, at ACU National (Melbourne). It was the view of the researcher that a moderator who was experienced in the practicum, both from a teaching and consultancy perspective in a range of Catholic, state and independent primary schools would be a skilled leader for the focus groups. Following the collection of the questionnaire, students were asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow up focus

group. Sixteen students indicated their willingness to participate. Their names and contact details were collected and the researcher contacted these students by telephone. Eight students were then selected on the basis of their availability to participate in the focus groups.

The eight students were randomly allocated to two focus groups. It was decided to have two groups of four students rather than one group of eight, to ensure the each student was able to contribute his/her ideas freely. This also ensured validity of data as information from both groups could be collected and compared. Both focus groups were held in a room that ensured privacy and confidentiality and the interviews were conducted on the same day.

The academic described above, conducted each group interview. The first focus group commenced at 9am, the second at 11am and each interview took approximately 75 minutes. Discussion was audio recorded using a tape recorder placed on a table in the centre of the group and transcribed within three weeks of the interviews being completed. The focus group leader also took notes of key points raised. This was done in case of technical failure of the audio equipment and to assist in the transcription of data. This form of interview allowed the interviewer to identify major statements and feelings of those interviewed and to consider their responses from a systematic, analytical and flexible perspective (Moore, 2000). Discussion was based on five questions formulated to elicit information regarding the student teachers' experiences and attitudes towards the extended practicum. These are in Table 3:6.

Table 3:6 Questions for Focus Groups

	Questions
Question 1	How well did the lectures at ACU prepare you for your extended practicum?
Question 2	(a) What were the most valuable elements of the extended practicum in assisting you to effectively manage your teaching in the classroom? (b) What aspects of the extended practicum presented difficulties (if any)?
Question 3	The transition program (following your final teaching round) is an important feature of the extended practicum. How useful was this and how did it relate

	to the extended practicum?
Question 4	How well prepared was your supervising teacher in understanding the purpose and implementation of the extended practicum?
Question 5	Do you have any further comments about the extended practicum?

Relationship between the research aims and the questions addressed in the focus groups

While Question one related to three of the four research questions, question 2 related to Research Question 1 concerning the purposes of the practicum and Question 3 on the adaptation of university learning into the practicum. Question 4 further elicited information on the supervising teachers' understanding of the purposes of the practicum (research question 1).

Semi-structured interviews

Introduction

The researcher also conducted structured interviews with five of the supervising teachers who had previously completed a questionnaire and seven university staff. Structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and in-depth interviews are all methods used to collect data in social research (Yin, 2003). Of these, Gillham (2000) suggests the semi-structured interview as being the most useful as it allows flexibility. A semi-structured interview has the advantage of allowing interviewers to probe, adding depth to the investigation, and clearing up misunderstandings. They can encourage collaboration between interviewer and interviewee, and also help to establish rapport. Mazeland and ten Have (1998) suggested that semi-structured interviews allow a more natural expression of opinions and ideas while strategically, the interview is able to follow a designated path of events.

Supervising teacher interviews

In the initial letter of explanation supervising teachers were asked if they would participate in a follow-up interview. Five of those teachers who completed the questionnaires agreed to participate in a follow up interview. These interviews were conducted at each school outside of teaching hours so that they did not interfere with teaching or other school duties. Each interview was conducted for approximately one hour and the researcher transcribed the discussions. The semi-structured interview was focussed around five questions which asked the respondents to provide information regarding the function and effectiveness of the extended practicum and to provide any recommendations they believed would make the extended practicum more beneficial for student teachers. Discussion was recorded by the researcher/interviewer and notes were periodically re-read by the interviewer to ensure veracity. However, the sequence, wording and the course of the interviews often varied in response to both the process and direction of the discussion. The data from the questionnaires was then collected and stored by the researcher prior to the data being analysed.

The questions used for the semi-structured interviews with supervising teachers are shown in Table 3:7.

Table 3:7 Supervising Teachers Semi-Structured Interviews

	Questions
Question 1	Did you agree with four (4) listed statements which best described the extended practicum? Why were they important? (This related to the first of the research questions that guided this study)
Question 2	(a). In what ways did courses at ACU prepare student teachers for the practicum? (b). What areas of the extended practicum could be improved? (This related to the second and fourth of the research questions that guided this study)
Question 3	(a). How well are supervising teachers in schools prepared by the university in assisting student teachers achieve the aims of the extended practicum? (This related to the first and second of the research questions that guided this study)

	(b). In what ways can the preparation for student teachers be improved? (This related to to the fourth of the research questions that guided this study)
Question 4	What recommendations would you make for enabling the extended practicum to better prepare student teachers to become competent teachers? (This related to the fourth of the research questions that guided this study)
Question 5	Do you have any further comments?

University staff interviews

The seven university staff who taught in the extended practicum completed a semi-structured interview consisting of seven questions that encouraged staff to discuss a range of aspects relating to the extend practicum. These staff are responsible for the teaching and evaluation of specific units in the extended practicum both in schools and at the university. These units are; Teaching and Classroom Management 1, English Education 2, Mathematics Education 2, Catholic Education and Schooling, Sociology Education and Children with Special Needs. The interviews were conducted by the researcher in the offices of the staff members at a time convenient to both parties. Discussion was recorded in note form by the researcher and reread for verification before the interview concluded. The questions used for the semi-structured interviews with university staff are shown in Table 3:8.

Table 3:8 Semi-structured Interview Questions: University Staff

Questions	
Question 1	List what you consider to be the three most important purposes of the extended practicum (This related to the first of the research questions that guided the study)
Question 2	Based on these purposes, how do you rate the effectiveness of the extended practicum? (This related to the first and second of the research questions that guided this study)
Question 3	Are the research assessment tasks set for the extended practicum beneficial? (This related to the second of the research questions that guided this study)
Question 4	To what extent does the extended practicum enable students to translate theory into practice? (This related to the third of the research questions)

	that guided this study)
Question 5	How well does the university prepare supervising teachers for the extended practicum? (This related to the first and third of the research questions that guided this study)
Question 6	What are the best three features of the extended practicum? This related to the fourth of the research questions that guided this study)
Question 7	Suggest two practical recommendations that would make the extended practicum more effective for student teaches (This related to the fourth of the research questions that guided this study)

The low response rate to the initial student survey continued to cause concern.

Therefore, in 2007 it was decided to add another group to the multiple case- study, a group composed of students (now teachers) who had completed the extended practicum in 2006. Ten of these students took part in a telephone interview which sought their responses to the following questions.

- 1) Looking back to your extended practicum, what did you understand to be its key purpose? (This question related to the first of the research questions which guided this study).
- 2) How well did your understanding of this purpose fit with your actual experience in the school? (This question related to the second of the research questions which guided this study).
- 3) How well prepared were you by your lectures to perform well in teaching and classroom management? (This question related to the second of the research questions which guided this study).
- 4) What did you understand by the expression “linking theory with practice”? (This question related to the third of the research questions which guided this study).
- 5) Did the practicum help you link theory with practice? Why or why not? (This question related to the third of the research questions which guided this study).

- 6) What suggestions would you make for improving the extended practicum at ACU National (Melbourne)? (This question related to the fourth of the research questions which guided this study).

The telephone interviews with completed primary teachers reflecting back on their extended practicum proved to be most valuable first in providing further data to compensate for the low response rate to the initial student questionnaire, and second because these teachers were able to consider the purpose and effectiveness of the practicum from the point of their (albeit limited) teaching experience.

Analysing the Qualitative Data

The research reported in this thesis used a multiple four-tiered methodology that required varying levels of analysis. This is because a range of groups and individuals of varying experiences, numbers and interests made up the case study group, and as a result, a range of information was collected. Data analysis of questionnaires, focus groups semi-structured interviews and telephone interviews explored and identified a range of experiences, reflections and suggestions from participants. The open-ended nature of many questions encouraged participants to contribute from individual and group perspectives. Demographic data were arranged in tabular format so that it was easily identified and obtained, and, yet remained totally anonymous.

A content analysis approach was used to analyse the qualitative data, establish categories from qualitative data using a 'key word' or 'key idea' approach. Responses were

placed into categories. These categories were ranked according to number of responses given. Analysis of these categories resulted in the emergence of particular themes. All questions were analysed and presented in a way that reflected similarities and differences between groups.

This data analysis process followed the Flow Model as described by Miles and Huberman (1994) as shown in Figure 3.2.

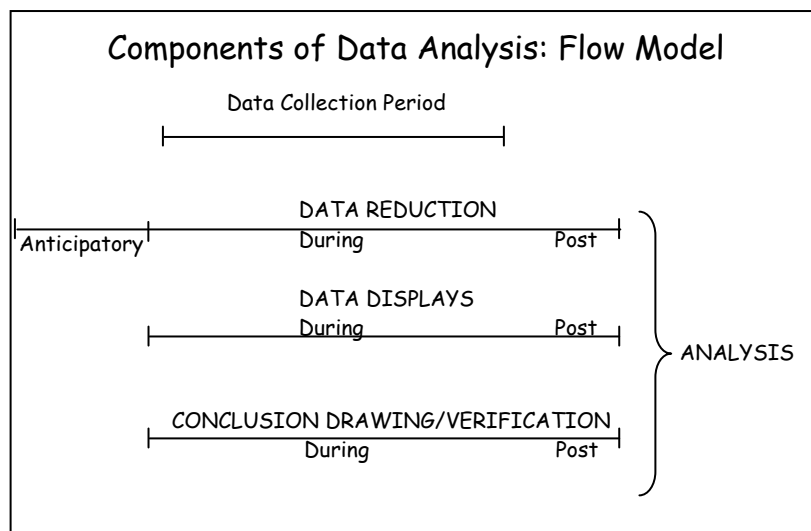


Figure 3:2 Components of Data Analysis: Flow model (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In the analysis of the data provided for this research, the data that was gained in each step of the case study were reduced onto spread sheets and then grouped into tables showing the most consistently emerging categories and their sub-categories. These tables are shown in the following chapters and were used as the basis of the analysis of the data. The next step was the identification of key themes and ideas related to the four guiding research questions, a process that outlines and provides the basis for the following chapters of this thesis.

The analysis of qualitative data is a demanding and complex process, yet it is rewarding if a systematic and flexible approach is followed, and supported with sound and clearly defined principles. The interpretation of qualitative data through interaction with different individuals and groups required the researcher to be flexible, skilled and non-judgemental. Yin (1994) states, “that the demands on a person’s intellect, ego and emotions are far greater than those of any other research strategy” (p. 55). To this extent, it is critical that the researcher is trustworthy and from a moral and ethical perspective values the contributions made by those participating in the study.

Ethical Issues

Prior to the research study being undertaken, ethical clearance was gained from the Human Research Ethics Committee, Australian Catholic University (ACU). This approval can be found in Appendix 5. All research in this study was carried out according to the guidelines of ACU National and the Catholic Education Office of Victoria (CEO). As required by the Research Ethics Committee of ACU, participants were given information relating to the study prior to their involvement, including advice that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, and that their confidentiality would be maintained at all times. These letters can be found in Appendix 3.

Conclusion

This chapter has described and justified the research design and data collection methods used in this study. The researcher has communicated and justified a pathway from epistemology to data analysis, and has explained and justified changes made to the original research design. The

purpose of this chapter has been to justify and outline the research design employed to explore the experiences of the key stakeholders namely, supervising teachers, student teachers and university who are involved in the extended practicum. The links between the epistemology of constructivism, the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism, the methodology of a multiple case study and mixed methods as a means to obtain data have also been addressed. A description and analysis of the data are reported in the following three chapters in the light of the literature review. In the final chapter of this thesis, the findings and recommendations generated by this study in light of the research questions are once more presented along with a list of principles which may guide a formal evaluation of the extended practicum.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA FROM PRESENT AND PAST STUDENT TEACHERS

Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses data obtained from pre-service primary teachers who took part in this research and also from recently graduated students who reflected back on their experience of the extended practicum. In the first case, the data was gained from a questionnaire distributed to students following a lecture, and two focus groups each consisting of four students. In the second case the data was gathered from telephone interviews with ten teachers who had completed the practicum in the previous year. The first section of this chapter presents and discusses the data from the questionnaire, the second section addresses the data from the focus groups, and the third, the data from telephone interviews. These results are discussed in conjunction with results from supervising teachers and university lecturers in Chapter six of this thesis.

Student Teachers: Responses to the Questionnaire

Demographic Data

The questionnaire required the student teachers to complete a range of closed and open-ended questions. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gain feedback about their perceptions, experiences and evaluation of the extended practicum both from a university and school perspective.

Forty student teachers of the 158 undertaking the extended practicum completed the questionnaire, representing a response rate of approximately 25%. To compensate for this low response rate, a further tier, that of recently graduated students was added to the case study, as has been explained in the research design chapter. Of the 40 students who completed the questionnaire, six were male and 34 were female. This ratio of male/female represented the ratio in the whole group. Data revealed that 24 or approximately 60% of students were between the ages of 21 and 25 years. Most of these students would have commenced teacher training at ACU following their completion of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). Eight students were between 26-30 years, 4 were between 31-39 years and 4 were between 40-50 years. Approximately 40% of these students would have commenced pre-service primary teacher education after having completed some work experience. Thus, the group comprised both recent school leavers and mature age students.

Allocating Schools for the Extended Practicum

Students are allocated schools based on the availability of supervising teachers willing to accept students from ACU, (National), Melbourne campus. The Professional Experience Placement Officer (PXP) at ACU, Melbourne is responsible for this process. Students answered the question “Is the process of allocating schools for the extended practicum satisfactory”; using a 4-point rating scale; strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Of the 40 responses, eight students strongly agreed, 22 agreed, nine disagreed, while one student strongly disagreed with this statement. While 75% students agreed that the process of allocating schools for the extended practicum was satisfactory, the fact that 25%

disagreed suggests that the process of allocating schools may require some review and improvement.

Students also provided other comments about the process of allocating schools for the extended practicum. These comments were arranged into negative and positive categories and organized into themes and sub-themes. The number of responses for each sub-theme is indicated in brackets.

Students' negative comments about the allocation of schools by the Professional Experience Department at ACU are presented in Table 4:1

Table 4:1 Negative Comments on Allocation of Schools

Administration and organizational issues (20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request information not considered (5) • Inappropriate placement (5) • Late timing of placement information (5) • Administrative problems (4) • Poor selection of supervising teacher (1)

Five themes emerged from students' negative responses. Of the 20 comments, 19 related to the way students were allocated to schools. Five students stated their requests related to their placement were not considered. Five students said they were placed in inappropriate schools, for example, "placed at same school twice", and "school too close to home". Five students stated that the timing of placement information from the university was problematic. One student stated "I think we could have known our schools well before we went". As a number of students were involved in part time employment and had personal and family commitments, it was important they be given adequate time to prepare for such responsibilities. Four students stated they had administrative problems, such as, "left off placement list", "placements made prior to confirmation from schools",

“poor liaison between Melbourne and Ballarat campuses” and lack of communication between PXP personnel, schools and students”.

While it is not always possible to place students in schools close to where they live, or close to public transport, every effort is made to place them at schools based on legitimate requests. Students are also clearly informed that requests are not always possible. However, given the complexities of this allocation process, it is not always possible to satisfy all students.

Students’ positive comments about the allocation of schools by the PXP Department at ACU are presented in Table 4:2

Table 4:2 Positive Comments on Allocation of Schools

Placement in schools (consideration of requests/good placement) (27)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent placement (13) • Excellent accessibility (5) • 3 areas available to select schools (3) • University accommodating (4) • Placement accessible following initial misallocation (1)
Timing (1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time adequate to contact school (1)

Overall, students were satisfied with information provided to them by the university and the timing of administrative procedures required for the extended practicum. Thirteen students commented that they were extremely satisfied with their allocated schools. Five noted that the issue of accessibility had been considered, four said the university had listened to and accommodated their needs, while three students said the university had selected their schools from within a range of areas close to where they lived. For example, one student stated, “I had a lot of issues; the university was very accommodating to work with me”, and another said that it “was completed by the Ballarat office who were willing to take my needs into consideration”. One student noted that although there had been a mistake in placement

allocation, this had been rectified by the university, while another student was positive about the timing of information commenting, “I was listed as having a school with sufficient time to contact the school prior to placement”.

Student comments confirmed that the Trescowthick School of Education had demonstrated responsibility in the allocation of student placements for the extended practicum. However, as indicated in a number of negative comments, some students expressed a range of problems with allocating placements and timing of information related to the extended practicum.

The allocation of students to undertake the practicum is a critical aspect of teacher education in which students learn best by being placed in schools that demonstrate collaboration between students with teacher educators who provide a range of effective teaching and learning experiences (Darling - Hammond, 1998; Cooper & Orrell, 1997; Khamis, 1996; Butcher & Parker, 1996). It is most important that students who undertake the practicum are supervised by experienced teachers, are allocated to schools which provide good access from where they reside as well as reasonable proximity to ACU which will allow them to make use of resources and facilities and which will further compliment their practicum.

Preparation for the Extended Practicum

Question 2 asked students how well their lectures had prepared them for the extended practicum on four dimensions. Table 4:3 shows the participants’ responses to these four areas.

Table 4:3 Preparation of Student Teachers for the Extended Practicum

Areas	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Understanding of placement requirements	12	27	1	0
2. Understanding of assessment procedures	6	30	4	0
3. Understanding professional responsibilities	8	24	8	0
4. Ability to link theory with practice	5	26	9	0

The responses to this question from the 40 student teachers were mixed. Thirty-nine students agreed that the university prepared them well in understanding the placement requirements for the extended practicum (area 1). This suggests that the documentation provided by the university, and information presented at lectures prior to the practicum was satisfactory. Thirty-six students indicated that the university lectures gave them a good understanding of assessment procedures (area 2). Again, this suggested that the information provided by the university was comprehensive and clear. Eight students disagreed that the program provided them with an understanding of their professional responsibilities (area 3), however, these are clearly documented on page 9 of the Professional Experience Program Guideline Booklet (EDFX404) (Appendix 6). Finally, nine students indicated that they had difficulties in being able to link theory with practice (area 4). In the context of the above statement, theory relates to the content of knowledge and theories discussed in the academic program at university, while practice relates to the implementation of these two areas into actual teaching in the classroom. Thus, results from this question suggested that generally, students felt adequately prepared in these four areas of the extended practicum.

The preparation of pre- service primary teachers for the extended practicum is closely related to the first research question which was, “How do the key stakeholders (supervising teachers, student teachers, first year teachers and university staff) understand the key purposes of the extended practicum in the undergraduate and postgraduate primary pre-service Bachelor of Education degrees at ACU National, School of Education Victoria?” (Blunden, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Khamis, 1996). In this case the student teachers generally perceived that their preparation had been satisfactory, and preparation is an important element that contributes to the effectiveness of the extended practicum.

Student Success in Teaching Areas

Students were asked to rate how successful they considered they were in eight areas of classroom practice. These areas were behaviour management, classroom management, using a variety of teaching strategies, use of information technology, developing and extending lesson plans, planning for extended teaching practice, meeting student needs and using a variety of teaching aids. Students rated these areas using a 3-point scale; not very successful, successful and very successful. Responses to this question are presented in Table 4:4.

Table 4:4 Success in Teaching Areas

Aspects of classroom practice	Very successful	Successful	Not very successful
1. Behavioural management	16	21	3
2. Classroom management	3	29	8
3. Use of teaching strategies	7	28	5
4. Use of information technology	10	27	3
5. Effective lesson planning	21	18	1
6. Planning for extended practicum	19	20	1
7. Meeting student needs	11	28	1
8. Using a variety of teaching aids	19	20	1

Responses to these questions indicated that students were either very successful or successful in the majority of areas of teaching practice. However, eight students indicated that they had problems in the area of classroom management. As these eight areas are important components of teaching students are required to reach a competent level of performance in each of these areas. Supervising teachers, guided by the Extended Practicum Guideline Booklet (Appendix 6) determine this level of competence. All of the eight areas of classroom practice noted in table 4:4 are closely interrelated, and, both individually and collectively contribute significantly to students’ ability to teach effectively in a range of school settings. The pre-service primary teachers’ responses to this question provided data regarding the first research question on perceptions of the extended practicum, and also data towards the second research question, which was “How do these stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of this extended practicum in assisting students to apply, reflect on and adapt their university learning in schools?”

Assistance Provided by Supervising Teachers

Students were asked to comment on how their supervising teacher and professional experience coordinator assisted them during the extended practicum. Responses to these questions were reviewed and organized into positive and negative comments. They were then allocated into themes and sub-themes (in brackets). Positive comments are firstly presented in Table 4:5.

Table 4:5 Assistance Provided by Supervising Teachers: Positive Comments

Provided quality supervision (12)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willing to assist (4) • Good supervisors (3) • Constructive (2)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive (2) • Student learning on a professional level (1)
Facilitating teaching skills (6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided many ideas (3) • Opportunities to teach (2) • Effective modeling (1)
Provide useful feedback (3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitored planning and teaching (2) • Constructive feedback and evaluation (1)
Good communication (3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to ask questions (2) • Approachable (1)

Twenty-four positive comments provided by the student teachers were organised into four themes. Generally, students received quality assistance from their supervising teachers, stating that their supervision was constructive, supportive, professional, and that supervisors were always willing to help them. For example, one student commented, “my teacher was excellent and was always offering to help in any way possible, and was a terrific support”.

Secondly, students stated that their supervising teachers had facilitated their teaching by providing resources and ideas, opportunities to plan, and teach the curriculum to their classes and modeling effective teaching. Comments including, “my supervising teacher aided me in all aspects of the job - planning, resources and meetings”, and “sensational, provided opportunities to teach” were further examples of support given to students. The third theme identified useful feedback as a way that supervising teachers supported students. They stated that feedback was fair and consistent. This was reflected in the comments, “my supervising teacher gave very good lesson evaluations” and, “my supervising teacher provided guidance and feedback, and was realistic about the unrealistic expectations and appropriateness of four weeks of full control”. Students regarded positive and accurate information as being most important when working with their supervising teachers. The comment, “my supervising

teacher offered advice, encouragement and ideas which were invaluable” supports the need for positive and professional feedback.

Finally, three students recognized that supervising teachers provided support through effective communication by being “approachable” and “able to ask questions”. Three students identified communication as being important during their teaching practice. This aspect of teaching was identified from the comment, “my supervising teacher was always available, helpful and friendly, trusted me to give advice, encouraged and helped me to balance my expectations”.

Generally, students were positive in their comments regarding assistance provided by their supervising teachers. Positive support and constructive feedback is critical for students as they undertake their final practicum in a range of schools. Supervising teachers play an important role in this process, providing professional guidance and moral support to students during this practicum.

Ten negative comments were provided by student teachers. These comments were organised into four themes as shown in Table 4:6.

Table 4:6 Assistance Provided by Supervising Teachers: Negative Comments

• Poor understanding of extended practicum requirements (4)
• Inadequate /poor feedback (3)
• Limited link between theory and practice (2)
• Limited support (1)

Four students complained that their supervising teachers had a poor understanding of the extended practicum, for example, “my supervising teacher expected too much in some areas” another said the supervising teacher was “unfamiliar with the practicum”, another had “unrealistic expectations”. Three students stated that supervising teachers gave inadequate or poor feedback, with “lack of constructive criticism”. Two students considered that the

supervising teachers demonstrated, “not enough emphasis on linking theory and practice”, and “teachers laugh at insufficient theory at university”. Finally one student said the supervising teacher provided limited support while in the school.

The data provided in responses to this question regarding the assistance provided by the supervising teachers help to consider the first and second of the research questions which guided this research. Positive perceptions of the assistance given by supervising teachers are an important factor in perceptions about the effectiveness of the practicum, and in perceptions about the pre-service teachers’ ability to cope with its demands (Cooper & Orrell, 1997).

Assistance Provided by School Professional Experience Coordinators

The professional experience coordinator in schools is the teacher who is responsible for the overall organisation within the school, including placing pre-service teachers with experienced teachers. There were both positive and negative comments relating to assistance provided by this teacher. The following table identifies the positive comments made by the pre-service teachers regarding this assistance.

Table 4:7 Assistance provided by Professional Experience Coordinators: Positive Comments

• Professional development (job seeking and school community) (9)
• Communication (5)
• Feedback/ support (4)

Participants made 18 positive comments related to assistance given to them by professional experience coordinators in schools. The three themes identified were professional development, communication, and feedback. Nine students commented that

their professional experience coordinator had assisted them in a range of professional development activities. These included, helping them become part of the school community by helping them “settle into the school”, “introduced me to staff”, “organised meetings”, and “monitored my progress”. One student commented that the professional experience coordinator “helped with my resume”. Five positive comments related to the quality of communication provided by the professional experience coordinator. Comments such as “worked a lot with this teacher”, “was superb, better than my supervising teacher, was very approachable and helpful”, “was willing to answer my questions and deal with all the core of my worries as a student teacher”. Four students commented that the feedback and support provided by professional experience coordinators were also useful. Students stated, “they were quite supportive, observed lessons and made time to comment and chat each day”. Finally two other students stated that the professional experience coordinator had helped them with their planning and provided helpful information. These comments demonstrated the range of activities professional experience coordinators engage in, both inside and outside the classroom, and suggest this can be an important role in the supervisory process.

The following table lists the negative comments made by students about assistance provided to them by their professional experience coordinators in schools. These are presented in Table 4:8.

*Table 4:8 Assistance Provided by Professional Experience Coordinators:
Negative Comments*

Limited support or contact (19)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited or no contact (13) • No assistance (5) • Varied because the practicum was at different school locations (1)
Did not meet requirements of extended practicum (3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never met students for suggested 1 hour per week (schools) (1) • Would not sign forms (1)

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did not see us teach (1) |
|--|

Students indicated that professional experience coordinators in schools assisted them to a lesser extent than supervising teachers during the extended practicum. Negative responses fell into two main areas, these being limited support for and contact with the students and not meeting the requirements or undertaking the documented duties of the professional experience coordinators. Nineteen comments from students which describe the first problem included “some talked to you on the first and last day, but didn’t care in between”, “during the extended practicum, we had no contact with the coordinator”, “the supervising coordinator did not know my first name” and the “supervising coordinator was on long service leave”.

The data provided by the pre-service teachers in relation to the support offered by in - school practicum coordinators is closely related to the issue of overall support for the pre-service teacher in the practicum (Butcher & Parker, 1996). It is also related to the extent to which the aims of the practicum are able to be met, and so provides data that has bearing on the second research question that guided this study that is “How do these stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of this extended practicum in assisting students to apply, reflect on and adapt their university learning to schools?”

Additional Comments about the Extended Practicum

The last question asked students to add any final comments they had regarding the extended practicum. These comments were organized into themes and sub-themes and are presented in Table 4:9.

Table 4:9 Additional Comments from Students

Timing and length of the extended practicum (17)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing • After final exams (7), • Some at beginning of year (3), • Placement should be throughout year i.e. 2 days per week over 2 terms (2) • 1 – 2 of those weeks should be in first year (3) • Opportunities for school camps, excursions (1) • Length • Block placements allow good teaching experience (1)
Assessment tasks (7)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty completing all tasks (5) • Urgent review of assessment expected (1) • Unrealistic-working 8-5 pm (1)
Quality of supervising teachers (4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students evaluate supervising teachers (1) • Selection of supervising teachers monitored (1) • Need for supportive teacher (2).
Organisation of the extended practicum (2)
Support from the university (4)
Value of the extended practicum (2)
Expectations of extended practicum (2)

The participants provided a range of positive and negative comments about the extended practicum. Some provided suggestions for making the program more effective and efficient. Seven themes emerged from this question. Seventeen participants indicated that timing and length were the most critical issues of the extended practicum, with 14 students suggesting various changes to its timing. Of the 17 suggestions for change seven suggested that the placement would be better held after the final exam period. One student commented:

I didn't like being placed in schools during the last week of schools. Assessments were completed and some times we were used to fill in time by providing lessons of our choice. It would be more beneficial for us to complete rounds at the beginning of the term to see set-up of classes, assessment and grouping

Seven participants made additional comments related to the assessment tasks required by the university, suggesting an “urgent review of assessment” and the “demands of working

8- 5 are unrealistic”. Five students suggested that they had problems with adequate time for planning their classes and assessment tasks. Four students commented about the quality of their supervising teachers. Two students suggested that teachers need to be more supportive, particularly for “students having difficulties”, another said, “selection of supervising teachers should be monitored”, and suggested “students evaluate supervising teachers”. Comments such as the following indicated the need to select appropriate experienced and committed teachers to supervise students.

I would like to see greater effort by the university to carefully screen/select the classroom teachers who elect to take a student teacher into their classroom. If they are not dedicated, innovative and happy teachers then the entire process is more stressful and not conducive to learning the professional and practical elements of a generalist teacher. Make sure they are competent to have us in the classroom.

and

students’ need to be asked after their practicum whether or not the school is suitable to have student teachers. This will help students in following years and make sure stress is not paced on students and prevent students from having difficult rounds.

Four participants suggested that the university should provide more support for students during the extended practicum, suggesting, “university supervisor to visit in final practicum”. Two students commented about the organization of the practicum, suggesting more time to prepare prior to the practicum, “we were not given ample time between finding out where we were going and actually going”

Some participants were happy with a number of aspects of the extended practicum, “teaching experience made me ready for teaching” and I saw the difference between theory and practice”. While one student said that “instructions and expectations were clear” another student was concerned that “schools expectations were different from university”.

Conclusions from the Questionnaire

Participants indicated that while some areas of the extended practicum needed review, they felt prepared for the extended practicum, had been successful in a range of teaching areas and were well supported by supervising teachers and, to lesser extent coordinators of the practicum. The need for schools and the university to work collaboratively in areas including the appointment of experienced staff to supervise student teachers, regular evaluation combined with a greater commitment from staff at the university to work with student and supervising teachers were the areas of the extended practicum that students believed should be addressed.

Student Teachers: Data from Focus Groups

Two focus groups were used to elaborate on issues included in the questionnaire. Two groups, each of four participants were interviewed. These interviews were structured around six questions which were based on information received from the questionnaire and developed to promote discussion on a range of areas related to the extended practicum. At all times the moderator encouraged open discussion between the participants. The interviews were undertaken at the university, two weeks following completion of questionnaires and approximately three weeks after the extended practicum. These interviews were audio taped, and the moderator took written notes. The audiotapes were transcribed and separately analysed to establish recurrent themes. The data from each group was then integrated into one and organized into themes of prominence.

Preparation for the Extended Practicum

The participants were first asked how well the lectures at the university had prepared them for the extended practicum. There were both positive and negative comments concerning this issue. All students agreed that they were well prepared. One student summed this up stating:

“well, I think they did basically. We knew what to expect by that time of the fourth year, and we all felt we had a pretty good idea of how things worked. We were ready and prepared to go. We did not have to be told to keep diaries or about folders. Overall I think we were pretty well prepared”.

Two participants said the subject, Teaching and Classroom Management 1, was useful and assisted them in developing skills in the classroom, while another student added, “we were provided insights into different ways of teaching” and we could “pick up ideas”. However a number of issues arose through the focus group discussions. The first was the timing of the practicum. Although the students said the lectures EDFD204 (Catholic Education and Schooling) EDLA102 (English Education) EDMA200 (Mathematics Education) and EDFX404 (Professional Experience) were “useful and comprehensive”, one student suggested that they should span over the year. Another student suggested that the extended practicum should be undertaken between the teaching units to allow for consolidation of theory.

The second issue identified the difficulty of applying the theory learnt at university to classroom teaching. This seemed to present a significant dilemma for students, which for some was quite stressful. One student said,

I was ready to do the kind of teaching ACU prepared me for, but when I got there the style of teaching of the supervising teachers

was so different. The ones I had were very old fashioned in the way they did things...so I decided to put everything I learned at ACU to the back of my brain and teach using similar methods to my supervising teacher...I taught it completely differently to the way I wanted to and the way I was taught at ACU...but it was very stressful.

Another student added, “the way supervising teachers manage children is often totally different to the way we are told in lectures”. One student related being told many times, “you have been taught many things at university but remember, this is the real world”. This discussion does indicate a problem with the communication and relationship between the schools and the university, or it could indicate a limited understanding of the requirements of the practicum, perhaps suggesting the need for additional professional development relating to the extended practicum for the supervising teachers. It is critical that staff from schools and the university and who are involved in the Extended Practicum have the opportunity to discuss collaboratively the nature and responsibilities of the program as well sharing their experiences with each other, including pre-service teachers where possible. The adoption of this strategy would support the development of partnerships including an understanding of the purposes of the Extended Practicum by the key stakeholders.

Negative issues fell into four main themes, these being inadequate preparation for classroom teaching, poor resources, length and timing of the practicum and poor supervision from the supervising teacher. From the first area, four students commented about their poor preparation for classroom teaching “teachers asked me ‘what’s your discipline strategy?’” and another said “supervising teachers teach differently to what we are told at university”. Three students commented that they had difficulties implementing effective discipline strategies, while one student stated, “you need to be in a school to learn about discipline”. Three

students stated that the length and timing of the extended practicum should be longer, while two students agreed that it would have been more beneficial to have used the two weeks of observation time in schools for preparation and planning for teaching at the university. Two students said the resources they had received from the university were not adequate or useful, “thought Teaching and Classroom Management would have covered more, I don’t think the unit really prepared us for some of the operational issues of the classroom” and, “many of the textbooks were at least 10 years old, and much of the subject material was not recent. As a result, I did not feel adequately prepared and up to date”. One comment related to the poor preparation of the supervising teacher, “supervising teachers not up to date”. This same student suggested that supervising teachers needed to be familiar with recent educational publications and up to date teaching strategies/techniques.

There was however a recognition by two students of the value of working with experienced teachers “you do pick up some useful ideas and I guess they have been doing classroom teaching for quite a few years” and “you have to be in a school and watch how teachers carry out discipline”. There was also a recognition that teaching is “not as easy as applying a set of instructions”.

This important issue of the differences between the expectations of the university lecturers and the supervising teacher emerged as an important finding in this research, addressing the first and second research questions. This issue is elaborated upon in the following chapters.

Valuable Aspects of the Extended Practicum

Students were asked to discuss what they considered were the most valuable aspects of the extended practicum that assisted them in effectively managing their teaching. All students

in both groups indicated that they valued both the structure and the timing of the practicum, saying that the six-week block placement of the practicum assisted them significantly in managing their teaching, for example, “the extended period of time was excellent and the two weeks orientation was helpful”. Participants provided a number of reasons why they thought this was so. These included, “It gave me an opportunity to learn how to manage the teaching process and the classroom as well”, and “you are there for half a term and that enables you to get a good idea of what teaching in a school is like”, “the 6 weeks gave me time to get to feel part of the school community”, and “I gained some insights into how the school ran as a organization”. Participants also said, the extended block of time allowed them to “feel like a fully-fledged member of staff” and “helped me to get to know the supervising teacher and to begin to build a relationship with her”.

The participants also valued the way the practicum was structured over a two-week and a six-week block. They described the advantages of this structure as; “the break in the middle before going back to do the 6 weeks really helped me prepare for full control teaching”. Another agreed, adding, that “it enabled the students in the class to meet you and get to know you, and for me to begin to feel part of the classroom”. One participant described how the block structure allowed her to improve her teaching control in an organised and developmental way, to teach a full sequence of a work units, “it had a good sequence: it started as one lesson a day, then two-a-day, then progressed to half a day, to a full day’s teaching”.

A further issue identified by several students was that the extended time provided the pre-service teachers with opportunities to teach as a “real teacher”, thus allowing them to consolidate their learning and teaching experiences. One summed this up well, stating, “the

idea of having a 6-week practicum was really beneficial. You have four weeks of full control, so you are doing pretty much what we would be expected to do next year, even though there is a teacher in the background. It is as close to the real thing as you could get” and another, “four weeks full control every day for 4 weeks was great you just get out there and you do it. It’s great”.

The second theme for this question was that of quality of supervision. Focus group two focused more on this issue with all participants agreeing that they had been provided with excellent supervision. One student noted that she had received thorough supervision because she was in a larger school with a composite class, thus had the benefit of two supervising teachers “in a bigger school, there is the possibility of more teachers being able to help you with the planning”. Other students added their praise for their supervising teachers. Comments such as, “my Associate teacher was fantastic, so ...it was the best experience for full education ideas, and even her approach to teaching was fantastic and “I was lucky - every teacher I had on teaching rounds was a good teacher, I could either question or trial learning, they engaged all the kids, they knew the kids’ levels, were helpful to me with all my lesson planning and they had plenty of ideas”.

Overall, students agreed that the length of the extended practicum and the structure of two blocks of two and six weeks with university classes between, allowed them to teach both within their allocated classes and across the school community. The participants were also generally happy with the quality of their supervision from their supervising teachers.

Difficult Aspects of the Extended Practicum

Student groups were asked what aspects of the extended practicum presented them with difficulties. Students from group one discussed two major issues relating to the extended practicum. The first related to financial difficulties experienced by one student when required to undertake full time teaching practice. This made it impossible to work outside and maintain an income “six weeks of full time teaching made it almost impossible to do any work outside and therefore to keep an income stream...this was a real difficulty for me, and I had to rely on mum and dad. I live independently away from home and independent of my parents”.

The second issue was also about timing of the practicum, but related to the convenience for the school. Two students stated that they had found that the timing was difficult for the school concerned, for example:

We were being sent to schools at times that were not good for them, at report writing time, or just before the end of the school year when teachers were stressed and didn't want the responsibility of student teachers. As a result I felt I was an imposition, and the school really did not want me. One teacher actually said to my face, “It is because the university won't listen and continue to send students at inconvenient times that schools won't take on student teachers”.

Another student agreed stating, his supervising teacher had said:

“ACU will need to work more cooperatively with schools if they want us to keep taking student teachers. In the last two weeks you do very little real teaching and in the last week there are so many extra-curricular activities, I did not teach for a single day in that last week”.

The teaching schedule for independent schools was different from that experienced in parish and government schools and this presented a further timing problem in that the

placement of students in these schools had to be restructured so as to meet the requirements of the practicum.

Group two discussed different issues. Participants stated that one of the most significant problems was the inadequate organization and preparation by the university. They argued that the guidelines and procedures for the extended practicum were inadequately documented and difficult to understand from both a supervising and student teacher perspective. One student said

The Field Experience book has been the most confusing thing I have ever seen. Every so often I would come across something, and it looked as though it had been cut and pasted and added to it, and there were extra things tacked on. And that is what it looks like. It needs a complete review. It needs someone to work out exactly what needs to go into the booklet and to put it into priority order. It needs to be clear. I found it really hard, and I would look at it, and say, “I don’t know what I am doing”, and the teachers were the same.

All four students in this group were concerned with the consistency and clarity of expectations of students during the extended practicum. This added stress to an already stressful experience. One student explained,

I would be so stressed out about what I had to do... the only way I can cope with this huge lesson plan which goes on for three pages, is to just write a word, or two words or a line of what I have to do at each stage. Then I canuse it so as I know what to do. The supervisor said, ‘There is not enough detail here’. I had to go home that night and re-write three weeks work of lesson plans, and I got there the next day, and she said, ‘You’ve got too much’. And another student said, ‘I think the idea of the card that they’ve got, is to help you focus and help you develop as a teacher, but I found it was not helping me – it was stressing me out.

Another comment reinforced this aspect, “Well I did not do all that detail, my teacher said it was a complete waste of time. Another student added, “It makes it hard to complete

the book you receive ... in fact you can't because they the teachers had already planned their work and they don't want my plan interrupting their's".

A further issue raised by students in this group was that of translating theory to practice. This had been challenging, as the teachers who supervised these students did not always support or use approaches taught at the university. One student reported her teacher as saying:

There's no way you'll be doing all of this in the classroom. You'll have to learn how teachers do it to manage teaching all the time. There's only so much you can do, and if you keep doing it in 'uni' mode here in the classroom, you are not going to survive, and they tell you that you have to stop.

Recommendations to Make the Extended Practicum More Effective

Students suggested a number of changes that would make the extended practicum more effective. The two groups discussed different issues however there was some overlap between ideas and suggestions for improvement.

Group one focused initially on the amount of university assessment tasks they were required to complete during the practicum. All four students agreed that there was too much university work to be completed during the teaching round. One student said:

they are a distraction and a stress because we do not have the time to teach a class with full control and on top of that find time to do assignments and other tasks related to subjects back at Uni.

A second participant agreed, suggesting changes such as:

major tasks should not be scheduled during the time of the practicum or we only have full control four days/week, but I think that goes against the spirit of the Extended Practicum...no one disputes that our lecturers have to assess us, but does it have to be whilst we are on the Extended Practicum? It is an issue that needs resolution.

This concern was compounded by the fact that the required journals and other assessment tasks were “not checked and we were not given feedback” and “we had done folders and folders of work, which hopefully might be useful when we do get a position, but they served no specific purpose with regard to our Uni course. I was not happy”. Group one also discussed supervisory issues particularly changes to supervision and assessment requirements by ACU staff during the extended practicum. One student reported “poor supervision, made worse by no visits from ACU staff”. Three students expressed a concern that ACU staff did not visit them during their extended practicum as they had done during earlier years. Finally, group one suggested the need for professional development for teachers who are supervising student teachers during the practicum. “It seems obvious that to me that all supervising teachers need some regular professional development to keep them up-to-speed on the purpose and content of the ACU Booklet, particularly if ACU staff are no longer going to visit students on rounds”.

Focus group two was concerned with the timing of the observation round. Students undertake an initial two week placement in their allocated school in which they become familiar with their supervising teacher and pupils. In addition, students are given the opportunity to discuss their teaching roles with their supervising teachers as well as assessment requirements both from a school and university perspective. All participants agreed that it would be better held in first year where it would help students determine if teaching was the right career choice for them. The following quote was typical of the comments made by the other students supporting this idea. “I think would have been a good idea in the first year. A lot of people dropped out because they couldn’t tell whether or not they should go into teaching. So it certainly would have been a good idea to have the

observation round in the first year, and then if you didn't like it, say all right, teaching is not for me".

Focus group two also discussed the content of the extended practicum, with all four students suggesting more opportunity for reflection on what they were doing in the classroom, rather than the current range of assessment tasks. For example, one student said, "one of the schools said that they do a lot of reflection-that's the whole thing - they encourage teachers to reflect. Maybe that would be better than parceling everything together and writing out a three-page document at the end". Another student added that these tasks would be appropriate earlier, stating "looking at the policies and getting to know the jargon you can't do that in your 4th year it is not important, we already have all that stuff".

This group also discussed the ACU Professional Experience Program Guideline Booklet (Appendix 6) which is provided to both students and supervising teachers. Three students suggested,

making the book more practical, less theory perhaps. More specifically, 'a more reflective type of thing', like you can write down what planning the school has done and take some examples of the planning for the whole year. Like keep copies of these things, and reflect on them, like in a review. See what was done, how it worked, and you know, how did you teach such and such a subject, how would you do it next time?

This reinforces the notion of more opportunity for reflection on teaching during the practicum.

Usefulness of the Transition Program

The transition program is a two-day university-based lecture and seminar program for students. It is the final component of the extended practicum held at the university immediately following completion of the school component of the extended practicum. The

purpose of this program is to introduce students to a range of educational personnel and teaching agencies that provide them with information and resources that support them when they begin full time teaching.

The participants generally considered that the Transition Program was very useful. Of the eight students, six discussed positive aspects of the program. For example, “I did not want to come on that day. We had just finished uni and I resented having to come back for another day, and being expected to sit from 9 till 4. No way. Despite that there were some good aspects”. Students particularly noted the presentations by the two graduates, the principal, speakers from the VTU Credit union and the VIEU as being very worthwhile. All students agreed the resources were really useful and “the open displays were great”.

However, students had further suggestions about the program, “yes, it was really useful, but some of it would have been more useful if we had had it before going on the round”. Several students noted that there was some repetition of the information presented that had already been covered in other units during the course. “We had the special needs stuff, but we had covered a lot of that during semester. I thought it was really a repeat of what we had already learnt” and “the legal liability was a complete waste of time”. Thus, students indicated that “overall, it was worth while going to it”, however it could be reviewed to eliminate any repetition of content and to review it’s timing in the course.

Supervising Teachers’ Understanding of the Extended Practicum

Participants in the focus groups discussed how well prepared they considered their supervising teachers were in understanding the purpose and implementation of the extended practicum. The interviewer noted that while all the students said the supervising teachers they

had were very good, and that they would recommend them to other students, the level of preparation for supervising students during the extended practicum varied. Of the six students who provided information about this issue only two said their teacher was well prepared for supervising students. For example, one student said, “my supervising teacher circled all the important stuff that I needed to do, and scrubbed out all the other stuff. I kind of went by his recommendations. He was very organized”. However, the other five students said their supervising teachers had not prepared thoroughly,

well, I think all of my teachers told me that they hadn't read the booklet, but they had a vague idea of what I was to do. They would keep saying to me 'I've got to read that booklet, I've got to read that booklet'. Then they would go off and have a quick read of it, and then come back and say, 'Well, what are we meant to be doing?' So I think it was confusing for them.

Another student said “our supervising teacher did not understand what we had to do. They had not read the booklet. It was hard for us being told one thing by ACU staff, but on arrival at the school, finding the teacher did not know about, or was not willing, to follow the guidelines. Another participant when asked if supervising teachers had read and used the ACU Extended Practicum guidelines said that “two out three teachers I had on my rounds had not read the guidelines, I realise they are very busy. Perhaps they need to be given time-release to enable them to work through the Booklet”.

Nevertheless, students did concede that many of their supervising teachers were quite experienced in the supervisory process. For example, “We (the supervising teacher and I) started going over the booklet. We looked at it, we got interrupted, so she said, ‘well I know what you are supposed to be doing anyway, as I had a 4th year student the year before”. Two other students added, “There is obviously a good body of teachers out there who are very good at this, although not all of them. I was lucky I had four great teachers”, and “anything I

needed” to know she’d tell me, if I asked her anything she’d tell me, and if she came across anything from a professional development session which she thought would be useful to me, she’d photocopy it and give it to me. She was really helpful”. However, one student was not happy with the supervising teacher, “My teacher was pretty old, over 60, and she apologised to me, but said, ‘I’m a control freak-I just cannot let go’”. She kept interrupting, writing stuff on the board. It was very difficult. It is however critical that supervising teachers understand and are well prepared to implement all aspects of the extended practicum. Appearing to be unprepared for students can impact on their credibility and the level of confidence the student may have in them and which may affect the students’ performance in the classroom.

One participant again commented about the information booklet, “I think if the booklet was shorter, and had the irrelevant stuff pulled out of it, it would be more valuable for the supervising teacher as well as for us. And then they could just say, the student teacher has to do this and this, and they have to do this with the teacher end of story”.

Additional Comments

The final question provided students with an opportunity to add any information that was not addressed during the focus group discussions. Only one student volunteered an additional comment, which perhaps summed up the thoughts of the students about the extended practicum, “Well, the extended practicum was where I learnt most about teaching absolutely. The more the better I say”. The other three students in the group endorsed this comment.

First Year Teachers: Telephone Interviews

Due to a low response rate from the pre-service teachers who completed the initial questionnaire it was decided to add an additional group of ten teachers who had completed the extended practicum in 2006 at ACU National, School of Education, Melbourne.

After gaining ethics approval to add to the original research design, the researcher conducted telephone interviews with these first year teachers, asking them to reflect back on their experience of the extended practicum. The questions used in these interviews were:-

- 1). What do you understand as the key purposes of the Extended Practicum?
- 2). How well did your understanding of this purpose fit with your actual experience in schools?
- 3). How well prepared were you by your lectures to perform well in teaching and classroom management?
- 4). What do understand by the term ‘linking theory with practice’?
- 5). Did the practicum help you link theory with practice? Why or why not?
- 6). What suggestions would you make for improving the Extended Practicum?

The first two questions related to research question one on the purpose of the extended practicum, question 3 related to research question 2, on adapting university learning in the school setting. Questions 4 and 5 related to research questions three on the linking of theory and practice, question 6 related to the fourth research question on the implications for teacher education.

Table 4.10: Research Questions and Summary of Responses: First Year Teachers

QUESTION	SUMMARY OF STUDENT RESPONSES	RESPONSES
1). What do you understand as the key purposes of the Extended	The Extended Practicum allowed students to get to know their supervising teachers, develop classroom management skills, self-confidence, to become more flexible and provided a greater	10

Practicum?	understanding of teaching generally and its responsibilities in teaching	
2). How well did your understanding of this purpose fit with your actual experience in schools?	Work undertaken at ACU related closely to work undertaken in schools	7
	The Extended Practicum provided students with greater responsibility and flexibility in their teaching practice and provided a “hands on approach to teaching	3
3).How well prepared were you by your lectures to perform well in teaching and classroom management?	Lectures at ACU adequately prepared students in the areas of teaching strategies for effective teaching and classroom management	5
	Students stated that some classes at ACU were poorly organized, classroom management skills inadequate and theory often did not relate to practice	5
4). What do you as a student understand by the term “linking theory with practice”?	Being able to apply what was learned at ACU to what was happening in schools	9
	Resources at university related to those being used in school	1
5. Did the practicum help you link theory with practice? Why or why not?	Increased length of practicum allowed for more planning and preparation time in this area	4
	Linking theory with practice seen as critical to student learning	3
	Linking theory with practice proved helpful to both students and supervising teachers - created positive working relationships	2
	Allowed fellow student to discuss aspects of theory and practice with each other	1
6. What suggestions would you make for improving the Extended Practicum?	Number of assessment tasks from the university should be reduced	3
	Extended Practicum should commence earlier in course	2
	Need to provide more professional development for supervising teachers and students	2
	ACU staff to visit schools more	1
	Supervising teachers need to be selected more thoroughly	1

	Extended Practicum should commence earlier in school year	1
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Understanding the purpose of the extended practicum

All ten students who were interviewed by a telephone survey responded positively to Question 1 which asked if they had an understanding of the key purposes of the extended practicum. Responses suggests that students were well prepared by the University in understanding their roles and responsibilities and which further complemented their understanding of the key purposes of the extended practicum. Lectures, tutorials and special lectures (Transition Program prior to commencing the extended practicum) in the Unit EDFX404 (Professional Experience) further supported the view of students that they were well prepared to observe, undertake practical experience in schools and to plan effectively for effective teaching and learning. Eight of the first year teachers stated that the extended practicum allowed them to get to know their supervising teachers, develop and improve their classroom management skills, developing self-confidence, provided added responsibility in the school and created greater flexibility in their teaching generally. All of these responses were of significant assistance to the first year teachers in them gaining a greater understanding the key purposes of the extended practicum.

Seven suggested that the work undertaken at the university related closely with their actual experiences in schools. In particular, a “hands on” approach during theoretical and practical classes at ACU assisted them greatly when it came to working both in the classroom and across the wider school community. Therefore, in order that pre- service teachers are able to participate successfully in the extended practicum it is critical that they have a thorough understanding of its purposes from a university, school and personal perspective.

Application of learning

Five of the first year teachers stated that lectures at ACU prepared them adequately to work in school, particularly in the areas of teaching and classroom management. Three stated that they were well prepared strategically to implement ideas and teaching techniques in their classes while two indicated that generally they were well prepared to work in a range of educational settings. However, five of the first year teachers responded negatively to this question indicating that they were not well prepared by the classes at the university in applying their learning to teaching in the classroom. These responses are somewhat alarming as it is critical that student teachers who are undertaking the extended practicum are proficient in this area as it is the final practicum prior to working full time in schools. Two of the first year teachers indicated they were well prepared in early lectures relating to teaching in the classroom however, they felt that the quality and purpose of lectures fell away as the semester progressed. Two claimed that lectures presented in teaching and classroom management were poorly planned and organized and that resources used at ACU were often outdated and lacked imagination and creativity. Another first year teacher indicated that much of the content presented at the university was inadequate in that it failed to instill confidence into their teaching. Both from a university and school teaching perspective it is important that staff and students collaboratively are able to understand the nature and intended outcomes of learning and its relevance to the university and schools where students undertake the extended practicum. To this extent, the ability of staff and students' to apply effective learning to their teaching is critical for all of the key stakeholders involved in the extended program.

Linking theory with practice

The need to successfully link theory with practice was considered by the first year teachers as being a key purpose of the extended practicum. All stated that they had a good understanding of the term “linking theory with practice”. This response suggests that the university and its affiliated training schools were effective in this area. Nine of the first year teachers stated that this term was well understood and translated, and inferred that what was taught at the university had a direct relationship with what was being taught in schools. One stated that this term was linked closely to the use of resources at the university and to those used in the classroom.

In response to Question 5 three of the first year teachers confirmed that the practicum helped them link theory with practice as it was seen as being important for student learning. Two stated that being supervised by an experienced and conscientious supervising teacher created an excellent working relationship between both parties. Another two stated that the extended length of the practicum gave them more time to plan and prepare for lessons, while one indicated that the extended practicum allowed time for consultation with fellow students. Overall, the responses indicated that documentation provided by ACU and information provided at lectures and tutorials was satisfactory. The ability to link theory with practice is an integral component of teacher education and should be demonstrated both in the university and schools where student teachers firstly acquire knowledge theoretically and apply it practically in a range of teaching situations.

Suggestions for improving the extended practicum

The final Question asked the first year teachers to suggest ways that the Extended Practicum could be improved. Responses were most positive and included a range of recommendations. Three suggested that the number of assessment tasks imposed by the university should be reduced in the context of students having to complete a range of assessment tasks from within schools when undertaking the extended practicum. Two believed that the Extended Practicum should commence earlier in their course as it would introduce them to “schooling” at a much earlier stage and would provided them with a range of classroom experiences that they would not need to undertake initially during the final practicum. Other suggestions included: need for the university to provide more professional development for students and staff from schools (2), staff from the university should visit schools more frequently as it would promote greater interaction with staff and students (1), Extended Practicum needs to commence at the beginning of term one as it would provide student teachers with opportunities to witness the beginning of the school year (1) and the improvement in the process of selecting of supervising teachers to supervise pre-service teachers from the university (1). It is vital that in order that the Extended Practicum continues to be effective, the recommendations put forward by first year teachers are discussed, evaluated and implemented in a manner that reflects it’s importance and changing role in teacher education and, in particular the practicum.

Key Issues Resulting from the Research Questions

From the questions used in the telephone interviews the first year teachers identified a number of key issues relevant to the Extended Practicum. In response to Question 1 all indicated they had a positive understanding of the key purposes of the Extended Practicum. In response to Question 2 which asked them to comment how well their understandings of this purpose linked with their actual experiences in schools, all responded positively which suggested that ACU had a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in undertaking teaching practice in schools. Responses to Question 3 which asked the participants if lectures at the university prepared them to perform well in teaching and classroom management were both positive and negative. Five indicated that lectures at university proved to be practical and assisted them significantly in their teaching, while another five indicated that lectures lacked appropriate content, were repeated, lacked organization while theory gained at university did not relate directly to teaching and classroom management in the classroom. Responses to Question 4 suggested that all of the first year teachers had a sound understanding of the term “linking theory with practice” which indicated that the university and schools were successful in this area. They responded to Question 5 by stating that the practicum linked theory with practice, although one third responded that the Extended Practicum should be more continuous and that the planning of lessons should be more adequate.

Question 6 asked the first year teachers to suggest how the Extended Practicum could be improved. A range of responses were provided which included: reducing the number of assessment tasks, staff from the university need to visit student teachers more frequently in schools, the Extended Practicum should be introduced earlier in the course, more professional

development in the areas of planning and preparation of curriculum along with more time given to student teachers to discuss the Extended Practicum when they return to university.

Conclusion in relation to the research questions and collection of data from pre-service teachers and first year teachers

This chapter has outlined data obtained from pre-service teachers and first year teachers about the extended practicum. Responses and comments have been organised into categories by the researcher and themes and sub themes identified.

Research Question 1 was “How do the key stakeholders (supervising teachers, student teachers and university staff) understand the key purposes of the extended practicum in the undergraduate and post graduate primary pre-service Bachelor of Education degree at ACU, (National), School of Education, Victoria”? Generally, responses from pre-service teachers and first year teachers involved in the extended practicum indicated that they had a good understanding of the key purposes of the program. The majority stated that they were well prepared for the extended practicum in understanding its requirements from a placement, assessment, professional and ability to link theory and practice perspective. Participants stated that the extended practicum provided them with a wide range of experiences in the classroom including more time for planning, more control which allowed them to observe and challenge students as well as being involved with supervising teachers and staff generally during block placement of their teaching across the wider school community.

Research Question 2 was “How do these stakeholders the pre-service teachers and first year teachers perceive the effectiveness of this extended practicum in assisting primary pre-

service student teachers to reflect on, apply and adapt their university learning in schools”?

The pre-service and first year teachers stated that the extended practicum was most effective in that it assisted them in the areas of preparation, planning and managing their teaching in the classroom. Secondly, they believed that the six-week block placement was excellent as it allowed them to get to know their schools and the students. Finally, they believed that the extended practicum was effective as it allowed them more time to work collaboratively with their supervising teachers and develop positive working relationships with them as well as with other staff members. However, some suggested a number of changes that would make the extended practicum more effective. These included, reducing the number of assessment tasks from the university, more supervision of the practicum from university staff, improving the timing of the extended practicum to earlier in the year which would allow students to observe the commencement of the school year, while a number stated the need to provide more time for discussion and reflective practice following the completion of the extended practicum.

Research Question 3 was “Does the extended practicum help student teachers to link theory with practice in the classroom? If so, how does it achieve this? If not, what factors would work against this linking of theory with practice”? While the pre-service and first year teachers generally considered that the extended practicum helped them to link theory with practice in the classroom, a number stated that this area was one of the major concerns of the program. Some found difficulty in being able to adapt and apply knowledge learned at the university to practical teaching in the classroom. They stated that being placed with inexperienced supervising teachers combined with inadequate level of professional development and availability of current resources at the university was a further problem that reduced the ability of students to link theory with practice.

Research Question 4 was “What are the future implications of this data for the continuation of the extended practicum at ACU, (National), School of Education, (Victoria), and in teacher education in general”? Implications of this data for the continuation of the extended practicum at ACU and in teacher education generally revolve around two major parameters, namely the environment in which the extended practicum operates and the experiences necessary for pre-service teachers prior to graduating, gaining their registration and qualifications to undertake full time teaching. It is important that partnerships continue to operate effectively between the key stakeholders (student teachers, supervising teachers and university staff) involved in the extended practicum and that issues including an understanding of the key purposes of the program, satisfactory preparation of pre-service teachers prior to undertaking the practicum, quality of supervising teachers and the ability of the key stakeholders to effectively integrate theory and practice continue to be a major focus from a student, school and university perspective.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined information obtained from pre-service teachers and first year teachers. The four research questions and findings from the key stakeholders and the literature have acknowledged the importance of the extended practicum both for the university and teacher education.

The following chapter presents and analyses the data gathered from the supervising teachers who supervise students during the practicum and ACU (National) lecturing staff who were responsible for teaching and evaluating units in the extended practicum program.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA FROM SUPERVISING TEACHERS AND UNIVERSITY STAFF

This chapter presents and analyses data from supervising teachers and university staff in order to address the research questions that have guided this study. The data from the supervising teachers was gathered using a questionnaire that was sent to teachers who supervised students from ACU, (National), Melbourne. A follow-up interview was conducted with supervising teachers who agreed to discuss aspects of the extended practicum further. Data from university staff teaching in the Trescowthick School of Education, ACU (National), Melbourne were obtained using semi-structured interviews.

Supervising teachers and university staff were asked the following questions:

1. What are the three most important aims of the Extended Practicum?
2. How effective is the Extended Practicum in preparing pre-service teachers for the practicum?
3. How effective is the extended practicum in assisting pre-service teachers translate theory to practice?
4. What are the strengths of the Extended Practicum?
5. How could the Extended Practicum be improved?
6. How well did the university prepare pre-service teachers for the Extended Practicum?

Supervising Teachers: Responses to the Questionnaire

Fifteen teachers employed in Catholic, independent and government schools who supervised student teachers from the Trescowthick School of Education, Melbourne responded to the questionnaire. They were first asked about their age and gender. They were then asked to

respond to seven questions relating to aspects of the extended practicum. The first question was closed, while questions two to seven were open-ended to encourage a range of responses from the participants. The supervising teachers were asked to base their responses on their perceptions and experiences of supervising pre-service teachers during the extended practicum.

Demographic Data

Of the 158 supervising teachers who were sent questionnaires only 15 responded. Due to the low response rate the researcher undertook a follow-up telephone call to each supervising teacher who had not returned the completed questionnaire. These supervising teachers said they were too busy or were not interested in participating in the study. The extremely poor response rate of 9.3% may suggest the lack of commitment to the university program, or that this was not a good time for supervising teachers to respond to the questionnaire. Furthermore, to address the low response rate the researcher undertook personal interviews with five of the participants at their respective schools to gain more in-depth information about the extended practicum.

Of the 15 teachers who responded to the questionnaire, ten were female and five were male. Three teachers were aged between 26-30, six aged from 31 to 39, and six aged from 40 to 55. This suggests that most teachers who answered the questionnaire were experienced both in their roles of teaching and supervising student teachers. Thirteen of the participants were employed in Melbourne metropolitan Catholic parish primary schools, while two were employed in independent schools in the Melbourne metropolitan area.

Documentation from ACU

All 15 supervising teachers had received documentation from ACU outlining the aims of the extended practicum however only six of the 15 could name the document correctly. This

indicated that while distribution of the documentation relating to the practicum was adequate, not all supervising teachers gave enough attention to it. It could be that the teachers who had been supervising for a number of years thought they did not need to reread the documents, however, as aspects of the extended practicum change from year to year it may mean that vital information is not being considered during the extended practicum.

Aims of the Extended Practicum

The teachers' responses to the question "What are the three most important aims of the extended practicum" are shown in Table 5:1. All responses were reviewed and grouped into themes and sub-themes. These are shown in brackets. The numbers beside each sub-theme indicate how many times each was mentioned by the participants.

Table 5:1 Aims of the Extended Practicum

Teaching skills (Face to face interventions with students & classroom teaching) (20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine teaching skills, content knowledge, and teaching strategies (10) • Classroom management (6) • Planning in a range of curriculum areas (4)
Professional development (understanding role and responsibilities of a teacher) (10)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding role within the school (4) • Developing individual teaching style (3) • Develop appropriate relationships (2) • Better induction towards full time teaching (1)
Demands of teaching (day to day challenges of teaching, issues and problems) (5)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complexities, responsibilities and demands of teaching (5)
Reflective practice (learning about themselves and as a teacher) (4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self evaluation and reflection of teaching strategies and techniques (4)
Theory and practice (1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students to put into practice theory learned at university (1)

Five themes emerged from the data gathered from this question. These were: development of teaching skills (20), professional development opportunities (10), understanding the demands of teaching (5), reflective practice (4) and opportunity to put theory into practice (1).

Of these themes, supervising teachers considered the development of teaching skills as the most important aim of the extended practicum. This theme incorporated three main sub-themes, which were refining teaching skills, content knowledge and teaching strategies. This included such skills as planning for teaching, refinement of assessment practices, effective time management and using a variety of teaching strategies. It also included classroom management skills which incorporated discipline and effective control in the classroom and thirdly, planning in a range of curriculum areas, for example, considering sequencing of content and developing units of work.

Supervising teachers indicated that the provision of professional development opportunities for students was the second most important aim of the extended practicum. This gave students an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a teacher. This theme incorporated four main sub-themes. The first of these was understanding the role of a teacher within the school, for example, being a member of a teaching team, working in groups both within and outside the school and gaining knowledge of school policies. The second included opportunities to develop an individual teaching style including becoming a more “experienced”, “independent” and “comfortable educator” and the third was to develop appropriate relationships within the school environment, with children and peers. Finally, another purpose was to provide pre-service teachers with better induction towards full time teaching by introducing them to the responsibilities of a beginning teacher.

The supervising teachers also suggested that the extended practicum provided students with an understanding of the demands and challenges of teaching. This included “real world experiences” of teaching across the school community, understanding the complexities and the responsibilities of daily teaching and “an immersion in all aspects of the culture of teaching.”

Reflective practice was viewed as a further aim of the extended practicum, providing students with opportunities to think about and develop themselves as teachers. This included self-evaluation and identification of self as a teacher. Finally, one supervising teacher suggested that the opportunity to apply theory to practice was a further aim of the extended practicum.

The Effectiveness of the Extended Practicum

Supervising teachers rated this question using a 3-point scale. From their perspective, student teachers from ACU, National, (Melbourne) had a high understanding (6) and satisfactory understanding (9) of their responsibilities in undertaking the extended practicum. This suggests that supervising teachers considered that students received satisfactory preparation from the university prior to the extended practicum.

Translating Theory to Practice

Supervising teachers responded to the next 2 questions using a 4-point rating scale: high, satisfactory, limited and unsatisfactory. Responses to these two questions, “translating theory of teaching practice”, and translating “theory of classroom management into classroom practice” are presented in Table 5:2.

Table 5:2 Translating Theory into Practice

Questions	High	Satisfactory	Limited	Unsatisfactory
Translate theory of teaching into practice	3	11	1	0
Translate theory of classroom management into practice	2	10	3	0

The supervising teachers indicated that student teachers from the Trescowthick School of Education, Melbourne were able to translate theory of both teaching and classroom management into classroom practice. They rated the former as high (3) and satisfactory (11) and the latter as high (2) and satisfactory (10), thus the ability to translate theory of classroom

management was seen as minimally less satisfactory than that of educational theory to practice. This suggested that supervising teachers considered that the pre-service teachers were able to apply what was learned at the university to teaching in the classroom. This factor was critical as both the application of a theoretical underpinning to teaching and classroom management skills are critical in enabling teachers to work effectively in school settings. However, one respondent suggested that the pre-service teachers' ability to translate theory of teaching into practice was limited and three suggested that their ability to translate theory of classroom management into practice was also limited.

Strengths of the Extended Practicum

Question six identified what supervising teachers thought were the greatest strengths of the extended practicum. This related to the second research question on the effectiveness of the extended practicum. Responses were summarized and grouped into themes. The numbers in brackets indicate the number of times a response was listed. These data are presented in Table 5:3.

Table 5:3 Strengths of the Extended Practicum

Professional development (9)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students learn how to be a teacher (6) • Student involved in all aspects of school administration (2) • Experienced teachers support and advise students (1)
Length of Extended Practicum (6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six week round allows students to establish themselves in schools (6)
Teaching practice (6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and implementing a program (3) • Implement classroom skills (3)
Organisation (4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation useful (2) • Assessment tasks practical and relevant (2)
Reflective practice (3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply and self evaluate teaching methods (2) • See potential for results (1)

The responses indicated that the extended practicum had a range of strengths. These responses were analysed and five themes were identified. These were opportunities for professional development (9), length of the extended practicum (6), involvement in a range of teaching skills (6), organization of the practicum (4), and opportunities to engage in reflective practice (3).

Supervising teachers identified opportunities for professional development as the greatest strength of the extended practicum stating that this is where students “work as a ‘qualified’ teacher” and learn about the “responsibilities, rewards and challenges” of being a teacher and start to grow as a professional. They suggested that the pre-service teachers “become more independent”, “develop confidence and skills” and “a sense of respect” (6). They also have the experience of being “involved in all aspects of school administration” (2) including “being professional members of a team” and the opportunity to be supported and advised by experienced teachers (1).

Six responses indicated that the length of the extended practicum was a significant strength. Supervising teachers stated that “the six week round allows students to establish themselves in schools”, “to become aware of school culture and to “observe, prepare, implement and enjoy teaching” and develop relationships with students, staff and others involved in the school community. This extended period of teaching practice was regarded by supervising teachers as being most important as it allowed them to work more frequently and closely with the pre-service teachers in the areas of linking theory with practice in the classroom and preparing and planning curriculum across the wider school community.

Supervising teachers indicated that the provision of opportunities for teaching practice was also considered a further strength of the extended practicum (6). This included working “as a real teacher”, “planning and implementing a program” (3) and practising classroom skills (3) such as management techniques and taking “full control of the classroom”.

The organization of the extended practicum was also considered to be one of the major strengths of the program (4). Documentation was recognized as being useful, allowing “students to understand their responsibilities and expectations” (2). Furthermore, supervising teachers considered “the assessment tasks given by the Trescowthick School of Education, Melbourne to be both practical and relevant” (2). The final strength identified by supervising teachers was opportunity for students to be reflective about their teaching practice (3).

Thus, supervising teachers considered understanding the professional role and demands of being a teacher as a greater strength of the extended practicum than that of actual classroom teaching practice. These factors combined with the length of the extended practicum, which gave students more time to become part of the school community and the organization of the practicum were considered more important than the opportunity for student teachers to reflect on their teaching practice in light of theory.

Improving the Extended Practicum

Question seven sought suggestions from supervising teachers about how the extended practicum could be made more effective for student teachers and this related to the fourth research question that guided this study. Their responses were summarized and grouped into themes. Numbers in brackets indicate the number of times a suggestion was given. These data are presented in Table 5:4.

Table 5:4 Improving the Extended Practicum.

Preparation of pre-service teachers (13)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory underpinning teaching skills lacking (7) • Some students are not well prepared for the practicum (5) • By 4th year any further preparation is beneficial e.g. Community service/school camps (1)
Timing / length (9)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length problematic (3) • Timing (3) • Structure (3)
Teaching skills (8)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline strategies in the classroom (3) • Teaching strategies in classroom eg. Voice (3) • Content knowledge and skills (2)
Organisation of practicum (6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to the type of school experience (4) • Administration / documentation of the practicum (2)
Supervision (5)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce ongoing support (2) • Contact with university lecturers for follow up and assistance (3)
Assessment (3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared tasks during extended practicum (1) • No other assignments during extended practicum (1) • Less tasks for student teachers (1)

Six themes for improving the extended practicum from the supervising teachers' perspective emerged. The predominant theme was preparation of the pre-service teachers (13). Secondly, staff considered that the timing of the extended practicum (9) was problematic. Thirdly, teaching skills (8), followed by organization of the practicum (6), supervision of the practicum (5) and assessment (3) of students were other areas identified as being key areas of the extended practicum which could be improved.

The most significant area for improvement of the extended practicum was in the preparation of the pre-service teachers in the Trescowthick School of Education, Melbourne. This fell into two areas. Firstly, supervising students said some of the pre-service teachers generally were not well prepared for teaching. This included not understanding the "significance of practicum", not being confident to implement effective class control (2), not being aware of the time restraints within the class timetable, not being able to "include all students" or to be flexible in their teaching. Secondly, seven comments related to the need for further theory to support teaching. This included, further "understanding of the class program" (4), particularly the literacy block (2) and a "stronger emphasis on technology" (1).

The second area for improvement related to the structure, length and timing of the extended practicum. Four supervising teachers made suggestions relating to its structure, recommending "student teachers should be placed in schools for a full term in the final year

of their course” (2), to introduce extended practicum for 3rd year as well as 4th years (1) and to reduce the observation period (1). Two teachers suggested changing the length, as “six weeks is a long time out of the classroom teacher’s program” (1) or it could be “reduced to 4 weeks”. Other suggestions for improvement related to the timing, suggesting it could be held earlier in the school year rather than towards the end of term when teachers are busy with report writing and parent teacher interviews (3).

The third theme for improving the extended practicum focused on further development of the pre-service teachers’ teaching skills. This included, classroom teaching strategies (2) including “planning lessons” and understanding and applying pedagogy (2), more knowledge of subject content (2) and effective discipline strategies (1). The supervising teachers also suggested changes to the structure and organisation of the practicum. Four teachers suggested a change to the nature of the school experience, for example, “send out to a school with another student”, “a ‘host’ school where students work with experienced teachers”, having “an apprenticeship-type program” and a “more hands on experience”. Two teachers suggested changes to the administration of the practicum (2) stating they had experienced confusion with assessment requirements and unclear documentation.

Further suggestions for change related to the supervision of the pre-service teachers. Three teachers suggested additional contact with university lecturers for follow up and assistance, while another two suggested different support mechanisms for the pre-service teachers such as “weekly meetings with a mentor (not supervising teacher)” and “peer support”. The final area of suggested change related to assessment. Three teachers recommended that while the pre-service teachers were in schools there should be a decrease in the number of assessment tasks from the university or more shared tasks.

The supervising teachers' responses to the questionnaire were reviewed, and follow up semi-structured interviews were undertaken with five of these teachers to clarify the information obtained through the questionnaire.

Supervising Teachers: Responses to the Interviews

Introduction

Of the fifteen supervising teachers who took part in the questionnaire, five agreed to participate in follow-up semi-structured interviews. The interview consisted of five questions based on the major themes identified in the questionnaire. The teachers were interviewed by the researcher at their schools and at a time that was convenient to both parties. The information from these interviews was recorded in note form by the researcher. Responses from the supervising teachers were analysed and allocated into themes and sub themes. These are presented in the following section of this chapter.

Aims of the Extended Practicum

Question 1 of the semi-structured interviews asked if the supervising teachers agreed that the four listed statements accurately described the extended practicum. All five agreed that “introducing the pre-service teachers to self-evaluation, reflective practice, rapport with fellow teachers, professional development, discipline strategies and effective classroom management” were most significant areas of the extended practicum. Supervising teachers also added, “developing skills in confidence “and” planning for students in the classroom, “undertaking responsibility in the classroom”, “developing individual teaching styles and overall perceptions of teaching” and “developing teaching strategies for students with special needs” best describe the purposes of the extended practicum. This supports information from the questionnaire on the importance supervising teachers place on classroom skills.

Preparing Pre- service teachers for the Practicum

Question 2a asked supervising teachers: “How well did courses in the Trescowthick School of Education, Melbourne, prepare the pre-service teachers for the extended practicum”. Of the eleven comments all were positive. Of these, seven related to the information and documentation provided to assist pre-service teachers in their preparation for the extended practicum and three related to pre-service teachers students’ theoretical knowledge.

Question 2b asked how the School could better prepare pre-service teachers for the extended practicum. Of the ten suggestions, four related to better understanding of the Curriculum Standards Frameworks (CSF), three related to management of discipline, two were about teaching skills, two about lesson planning, two suggested a need for improved understanding of teaching methodology and one indicated a need for peer support for pre-service teachers. Thus, while student preparation for the extended practicum was adequate, clearly supervising teachers indicated that it could be improved in a number of areas.

University Support for Supervising Teachers

Questions 3a and 3b sought the perceptions of respondents about how well the university supported supervising teachers for the extended practicum and asked supervising teachers for their suggestions as to how it maybe improved. In answer to the first part of this question, all nine comments received from the supervising teachers related to the documentation received from the Trescowthick School of Education, ACU, (National), Melbourne. Of these responses, six were positive, suggesting the supervising teachers believed they were well prepared through the “clear” and “satisfactory” guideline booklet and “supervisors were also well prepared through having an understanding of the Extended

Practicum Guideline Booklet”. However, one supervising teacher stated, “there was little explanation for new supervising teachers”.

Four additional comments contained suggestions for improvement. These were, “in servicing for supervising teachers would be useful”, “need contact with university / Professional Experience Department”, and “need to develop more rapport with pre-service teachers and the university”. These comments were reinforced in the following question that asked supervising teachers for ways their preparation could be improved. Two respondents suggested a need for professional development for supervising teachers, for example a ‘workshop’. Two suggested “greater emphasis on specialist units, for example, music, physical education, art”, and “guided reading linked with literacy”. Two suggested improved information from the university about requirements of university tasks to be undertaken during the practicum. One respondent recommended that supervising teachers be involved in an evaluation of the program. These responses clearly indicate the need for more involvement with supervising teachers on the part of the university in the form of professional development, more and better information about the extended practicum and improved communication generally between the schools and the university.

Improving the Practicum

Question four asked for recommendations that would enable the extended practicum to better prepare student teachers. Of the eight suggestions for improving the extended practicum, two suggested “more school experience from an earlier stage of the course”, two suggested that the practicum should be more flexible and “hands-on” and another two suggested more emphasis on curriculum content, with fewer university tasks to be undertaken during the extended practicum. One teacher recommended “lecturers should visit pre-service teachers on rounds”, while another suggested that the structure of the practicum should be

changed to an “‘apprenticeship’ type program where a student will be based at a school for a year – 1 day a week for the term including a 6 week extended practicum”.

Additional Comments about the Extended Practicum

Question 5 asked for any other comments regarding the extended practicum. Of these, two supervising teachers supported the extended practicum as “the six week round enables pre-service teachers to see and experience a range of curriculum areas and participate in many areas of school life”. However, four teachers’ stated a need for “remediation programs at the university after the extended practicum”, “a need to use the Catholic Education Office”, “greater assessment input from the university” and more opportunities to work with specialist teachers. Finally, one teacher stated that it was “great to see that extended practicum is being reviewed may help better utilise supervising teachers in relation to training”.

Conclusion to Questionnaires and Interviews with Supervising Teachers

Supervising teachers are one of the key stakeholders in the extended practicum. They play a significant role in the supervision and evaluation of student teachers. The questionnaires and structured interviews gave them an opportunity to provide comments and recommendations relating to a number of aspects of the program. This conclusion incorporates and summarises responses from the questionnaires and interviews completed by these supervising teachers.

In both the questionnaires and interviews, supervising teachers considered that the major aim of the extended practicum was overwhelmingly the development and refining of teaching skills, with professional development related to understanding the roles and responsibilities of being a teacher as the second most important aim. Understanding the demands of teaching generally and opportunities for reflective practice were other noteworthy

aims of the practicum, however, only one respondent suggested that integrating theory with practice was a further major aim of the extended practicum. Given that those who took part were experienced supervisors this finding is significant.

Supervising teachers thought that pre-service teachers had a satisfactory understanding of their responsibilities when undertaking the extended practicum. The Trescowthick School of Education, ACU (National), (Melbourne) prepared them well, through the provision of documentation relating to the extended practicum. However, in the follow up interview supervising teachers suggested pre-service teachers needed more preparation in a range of teaching and classroom management skills.

In the questionnaires supervising teachers rated pre-service teachers' ability to translate theory to practice in both the areas of teaching and classroom management as being satisfactory, however this was not mentioned in the follow up interviews. They considered that the provision of opportunities for professional development was the major strength of the extended practicum, with the length of the experience in schools and involvement in a range of teaching skills being of less importance. Finally organization and opportunity for reflective practice were noted but not considered as important as the first three strengths.

Supervising teachers considered better preparation of pre-service teachers prior to the practicum as the most significant factor in improving the extended practicum. This included a focus on classroom teaching and management skills. Secondly, they stated that the timing of the practicum was unsatisfactory as it occurred during a busy time in the school year. Other areas for improvement included the way the university organized the practicum, how the university supervised pre-service teachers and the number and type of assessment tasks required by the university.

University Staff: Responses to a Semi-structured Interview

The following section of this chapter presents the results of semi-structured interviews completed by seven academic staff from the Trescowthick School of Education, ACU, (National), Melbourne. These staff members were responsible for teaching the units which make up the extended practicum. These units are taught at the university, and require pre-service teachers to complete a number of theoretical and practical assessment tasks both at university and while in schools. These units are; Language Education 2, Mathematics Education 2, Catholic Education and Schooling, Sociology Education and Teaching and Classroom Management 1. The nature of the extended practicum allows staff from the university to work collaboratively with the key stakeholders (pre-service teachers and supervising teachers) in the areas of assessment and general well being of pre-service teachers both from a university and school perspective.

Staff from the Trescowthick School of Education ACU, (National), Melbourne, were interviewed individually by the researcher at the university at a time that was convenient to both parties. The interview was based on seven areas that drew on the major themes identified by pre-service teachers and supervising teachers relating to aspects of the extended practicum and also that related closely to the research aims of the study. The information from these interviews was recorded in note form by the researcher. Responses from the university staff were analysed and allocated into themes and sub themes. Numbers in brackets indicate the number of comments provided in each theme or sub-theme. These are presented in the following section of this chapter.

Aims of the Extended Practicum

University staff were asked what they considered to be the three most important aims of the extended practicum. Responses to this question were analysed and grouped into five themes and sub-themes. These are presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5:5 Purposes of the Extended Practicum

Theory and practice (9)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research project relating to a given KLAs¹ (3) • Linking theory with practice (3) • Allow assessment tasks to be linked with classroom practice (2) • Consolidating and synthesizing inclusive pedagogies (1)
Length of time (4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have an extended period of time in schools (4)
Professional development (3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn new approaches to teaching (1) • Professional critiquing both individually and by colleagues (1) • Gauge suitability of student as prospective teachers
Teaching practice (2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre- service teachers take nearly total responsibility before they have a job (1) • To provide opportunities to practice teaching skills (1)
Reflective practice (2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides opportunity for critical reflection about teaching (2)

University staff offered a range of responses in relation to the purposes of the extended practicum. They considered the most significant aim was the linking of theory with practice, (9). Three comments related specifically to linking theory to practice in “an authentic setting”, three to applying the research project to Key Learning Areas (KLA’s) in the school setting, the value of linking university assessment tasks to classroom practice (2) and one comment about consolidating and synthesizing inclusive pedagogies. Secondly, four university staff stated that the opportunity to teach over an extended period in a block placement was an important purpose of the program. This allowed pre-service teachers to

have longer for “classroom practice”, “with the same group of children” and “the same community over an extended period”.

1. Key Learning Areas (KLA) - The Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF), (2000), describes what students should know in eight key areas of learning from Preparatory to Year 10. It provides the major elements of the curriculum and the standards expected of successful learners. The eight key learning areas are The Arts, English, Health and Physical Education, Languages (LOTE), Mathematics, Science, Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) and Technology.

The third purpose of the extended practicum was that of professional development with three comments being provided. University staff identified being able to learn new approaches to teaching (1), being critiqued by colleagues (1) and being able to gauge the suitability of pre-service teachers as prospective teachers (1). Fourthly, two staff indicated that teaching practice was an important purpose of the practicum as it involves pre-service teachers taking nearly all responsibility before they have a job (1) and providing opportunities to practice teaching skills (1). Finally, two staff noted the opportunity for reflective practice as an important purpose of the extended practicum, suggesting that the practicum provided teaching experiences for critical reflection in post-round discussions between lecturers and pre-service teachers. Thus, university staff considered the main purposes of the extended practicum were the ability of pre-service teachers to apply theory to practice, a longer time in one school, professional development, to practise teaching skills and being reflective about their teaching as main aims of the practicum. Interestingly, six university staff noted the importance of the longer period of time facilitating a number of what they saw as the aims of the practicum. This suggests that university staff considered that these skills may not have been achievable in a shorter period of time.

Effectiveness of the Extended Practicum

Question two asked university staff to consider the effectiveness of the extended practicum. Of the seven staff interviewed, six rated it as effective while one considered that it

had limited effectiveness. Three university staff considered it effective as it enabled pre-service teachers to “implement ideas from university “and to “consolidate and synthesize inclusive pedagogies”, including undertaking a research project related to a specific KLA. University staff also recognized the value of the school environment where pre-service teachers could “learn new approaches to learning” as well “becoming more aware of the realities and challenges of teaching”. The extended practicum also provided experiences to help pre-service teachers to critique the effectiveness of their teaching. They also acknowledged the skills of supervising teachers, suggesting they “are able to assess pre-service teachers well”.

Value of Research Assessment Tasks

Question three asked university staff how beneficial the research assessment tasks set for the extended practicum were. Interestingly, although they were all involved in setting these tasks, four staff stated they were beneficial, however, three stated they had limited benefit. Five positive comments suggested that pre-service teachers “gain much from the research experiences” as they allow pre-service teachers to “apply theoretical concepts to a practical situation, which provide insights into teaching”, they extend knowledge and application of a given KLA, providing “current thinking to inform their teaching of specific concepts”. They also suggested that the assessment tasks “facilitated effective reflection on teaching”. Of the negative comments, two university staff stated that these research projects “added unfairly to an existing heavy workload, particularly if it is not related to teaching”. It was also noted that “pre-service teachers are not able to research effectively because of limited technology in the schools” and that links regarding the research projects between university and schools were limited.

Ability to Translate Theory to Practice

Of the seven university lecturers five stated that the extended practicum enabled pre-service teachers to translate theory into practice, while two considered that it had limitations. They suggested that while the practicum provides a range of opportunities to translate theory to practice, this clearly depends on whether the supervising teacher's practice complements theories currently being taught at the university. One lecturer said that the extended practicum also provided opportunities for new and different approaches to teaching.

University Support for Supervising Teachers

Question five asked university staff how well the university prepared supervising teachers for the extended practicum. Two staff considered that the university did this well, however, five considered that the university did not prepare supervising teachers adequately. Two lecturers stated that there "needs to be better communication between university and schools", two stated that "some supervising teachers have limited knowledge of the purpose", while one commented that the "university provides all the necessary material" "responsibilities and duties" of the extended practicum," and of the importance of the tasks assigned. It is critical that supervising teachers have a thorough understanding of the extended practicum, and it is the responsibility of both supervising teachers and the university to ensure they are well prepared.

Positive Features of the Extended Practicum

Question six asked the university lecturers what they considered were the three best features of the extended practicum. Their responses were reviewed, grouped into themes and are presented in Table 5:6.

Table 5:6 Three Best Features of the Extended Practicum

Linking theory and practice (8)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply academic work to their teaching (2) • Research tasks within the extended practicum (2) • Research based assessment tasks inform planning and teaching (1) • Reflection opportunities following practicum (1) • New approaches to assessment and classroom teaching (1) • Can link theory with practice because of when practicum occurs (1)
Professional development (4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-service teachers learn through team work at schools (1) • Pre-service teachers support each other, when appointed to the same school (1) • Pre- service teachers improve their relationships/experiences with other staff (1) • Pre- service teachers become involved in professional development (1)
Timing/length (4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time adequate and realistic for assessment (1) • Long period in one class helps develop confidence (1) • Timing is good (2)

Three themes were developed from the responses received from university staff. Firstly, university lecturers considered the opportunity for pre-service teachers to link theory with practice (8) as the most important feature of the extended practicum. They considered that academic work, particularly the research tasks, “can inform what they do in the classroom”. Additionally, the placement of the practicum between academic components facilitated this linking and allowed “reflection opportunities following the practicum”. Secondly, professional development was considered an important aspect of the extended practicum. Lecturers considered it valuable that when in schools, “pre-service teachers learn through team work”, “can support each other” and have the chance to “develop professional relationships with other staff”. Finally, the timing of the extended practicum was seen to be important so that it was long enough for pre-service teachers to complete assessment tasks and develop confidence and competence in the classroom.

Suggestions for Improving the Extended Practicum

Question seven asked university staff for two recommendations that would make the extended practicum more effective for pre-service teachers. Their responses were grouped into five themes and are presented in Table 5:7.

Table 5:7 Suggestions to Make the Extended Practicum more Effective

Assessment (5)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce number assessment tasks (2) • Better prepare supervising teachers about assessment tasks (2) • Provide effective evaluation tools for assessment (1)
Supervision (4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff from university to spend more time in classrooms (2) • ensure relevance of university content (1) • Pre-service teachers linked with AT's with reputable best practice (1)
Theory to practice (3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep core academic units in the extended practicum (1) • Use the practicum for applying theory from other subjects at uni. (1) • Offer the latest approaches to teaching in KLAs. (1)
Timing/length (3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional two weeks to encompass a whole term (1) • Timing of extended practicum be improved, have it earlier (1) • Have it in a complete block not separated by 2 weeks holiday (1)
Administration (1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite school supervisors into ACU to discuss aims of the practicum

University staff suggested a range of recommendations they considered would make the extended practicum more effective. The major area for improvement related to student assessment. There was a concern that pre-service teachers had too much assessment which increased the pressure on them and impacted on their ability to get the most from the extended practicum.

Given this concern, their recommendations for change included limiting the number of assessment tasks (1), integrating assessment tasks (1) better informing supervising teachers about tasks for specific units (2) and developing a checklist for assessment of the KLAs (1).

University staff recommended that three changes to the academic content of the extended practicum. These changes included retaining core academic units and using the extended practicum to also apply theory from other subjects, and offering the latest approaches to teaching in the KLA's. Timing of the extended practicum was also an area for improvement with an additional two weeks to encompass a whole term of teaching in schools, having it earlier and it in a complete block not separated by 2 weeks vacation. University staff also suggested changes to the supervision of pre-service teachers, including, staff from university to spend more time in classrooms (2) to ensure relevance of university content and linking pre-service teachers with "reputable" supervising teachers. Finally, one university staff suggested inviting school supervisors into ACU to discuss the aims of the practicum.

Conclusion to Interviews with University Staff

University staff who participated in the semi-structured interviews represented all staff who presented academic units in the extended practicum. Most of these staff considered that the extended practicum was effective. They considered the linking of theory with practice as being the major aim of the extended practicum, with opportunities for teaching practice as the second most important aim, and professional development and reflective practice to be less important aims. While linking theory with practice was considered the most important aim of the extended practicum, and noted also as a strength, two university staff thought it had limitations in this area. While professional development was recognized as a lesser aim of the practicum, it was also considered to be a strength of the program. Interestingly, while the opportunity for teaching practice was noted as an important aim, this was not noted by any of university staff as a strength of the extended practicum. Some concerns were raised relating to the assessment tasks pre-service teachers were required to undertake when in schools. Three of the seven staff felt that these tasks had limited value, with a number of

recommendations provided to change the nature of these tasks. While the length and timing of the extended practicum were recognized as strengths, several suggestions about these factors were included as areas for improvement. Of particular concern is that five of these lecturers considered that the university did not prepare supervising teachers well for supervising pre-service teachers. This is underlined by the fact that in general supervising teachers had quite different views about the purpose of the extended practicum than did the university lecturers.

Supervising teachers believed the major aim of the extended practicum was for pre-service teachers to be effective in the development and refining of teaching skills related to the classroom, while they also considered it important that these teachers understood their roles and responsibilities both in the classroom and across the wider school community. They also saw the importance of professional development which further assisted the pre-service teachers undertaking the extended practicum.

Conclusion

Supervising teachers and university staff undertake significant roles in the extended practicum in teaching, supervising and evaluating students in the pre-service primary teaching degrees. Overwhelmingly, supervising teachers considered the major aim of the extended practicum was the development and refining of teaching skills. This contrasted with university staff, who considered the linking of theory with practice as being the major aim of the program with teaching skills identified as being secondary. Supervising teachers rated professional development and understanding the roles and responsibilities of being a teacher as being the second most important aim of the practicum, while university staff considered this as less important. However, both university staff and supervising teachers recognized this aspect as an important strength of the extended practicum.

Supervising teachers stated that pre-service teachers had a satisfactory understanding of their responsibilities when undertaking the extended practicum and that ACU, (National), Melbourne prepared them well, through the provision of effective documentation about the extended practicum. In follow up interviews, supervising teachers suggested a need for more preparation in a range of teaching and classroom management skills. Despite this suggestion, supervising teachers regarded most pre- service teachers' ability to translate theory to practice in both the areas of teaching and classroom management as being highly satisfactory. Of note, is that the majority of teaching staff considered that the university did not prepare supervising teachers well. Supervising teachers suggested the main areas for improvement for the extended practicum were better preparation of pre-service teachers prior to the practicum, a change to the timing and structure of the practicum, changes to the way the university supervises pre-service teachers and the number and type of assessment tasks required from the university. This compared with university staff who raised concerns relating to the number of assessment tasks pre-service teachers are required to complete when in schools, while they recognized the length and timing of the extended practicum as a strength. This suggests that the key stakeholders' understanding of the aims and responsibilities related to the extended practicum may differ in a number of areas.

The following chapter brings together findings from the literature and responses from the pre-service teachers, the first year teachers, the supervising teachers and the university staff in relation to the four questions posed by this study. The last chapter sets out final conclusions from the research and makes recommendations for the evaluation and future development of the extended practicum in the Bachelor of Education degrees in the Trescowthick School of Education, ACU (National), Melbourne.

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to provide an investigation into the effectiveness of the extended practicum in the Bachelor of Education undergraduate and post graduate degrees in the Trescowthick School of Education at ACU, (National), Melbourne. This is the final school-based practical experience prior to the completion of the degree. The study sought to understand how the major stakeholders involved in the extended practicum experienced this aspect of teacher education, if it achieved what it was expected to achieve and how stakeholders thought it could be enhanced. These stakeholders were student teachers, first year teachers, supervising teachers and university staff.

The results of the empirical research have been presented in the previous two chapters. This chapter returns to the four research questions and discusses each in turn relating the results of this study to the literature, and noting the recommendations that emerge from these discussions.

Research Question 1: Key Purposes of the Extended Practicum

The practicum has been long recognised as a fundamental aspect of initial teacher education (Brown, Martinez, Tromans & White, 2002; Brown & Lancaster, 2004; Martinez, 1998; Ramsey, 2002). The literature generally identifies the overarching purpose of the practicum as preparing pre-service teachers for competence in the classroom and providing them with learning experiences under the supervision of experienced practitioners (Murray-Harvey, Silens & Saebel, 1999; PVETC, 2005; Toomey et al, 2005). During the practicum pre-service teachers observe and manage classes and undertake a range of tasks that include planning, teaching, assessing and reporting (Boyd & Goss, 2001; Broadbent, 2005; Brown &

Lancaster, 2004; Brown, Martinez, Tromans & White; 2002; PVETC, 2005). The practicum provides them with opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes that they need as beginning teachers. While the literature suggests that the practicum has many purposes, it generally does not suggest that any one purpose is more or less critical than others. However, it does recognise the importance of teaching and classroom management and the application of theory learnt at university to teaching practice in schools (PVETC, 2005, Ramsey, 2000).

The literature describes the purposes or aims of the practicum as providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop and refine their classroom teaching skills. These skills may include, organizing curriculum content, working face-to-face with students, classroom management, monitoring and evaluating student progress, developing teaching resources and developing an effective range of teaching and learning strategies (ATEA, 2002; Charles & Charles, 2004; Fairbanks, Freedman & Kahn, 2000; Ferrier-Kerr, 2003; PVETC, 2005, Ramsey, 2000). When the supervising teachers (in both the questionnaire and interviews) were questioned about the purposes of the extended practicum they indicated that the ability of students to develop and refine teaching skills was much more important than any other purpose. Of the 40 responses received, 20 related to teaching skills, including practising teaching, structuring content knowledge, using a range of teaching strategies, planning for teaching, assessment, time management, classroom management, effective control, and planning in a range of curriculum areas and face-to-face interactions with children during class time. However, of the 20 responses provided from the university staff relating to the purpose of the extended practicum, only two related to the specific practices of classroom teaching. While pre-service were not asked directly about the purposes of the extended practicum, documentation relating to its specific objectives was provided to all of them as well as supervising teachers and university staff involved in this program. Of the six specific objectives outlined in the ACU Practicum guideline booklet (2006), three related to classroom teaching. These were:

- to assume independence in preparing and planning curriculum programs and sequenced units of work,
- to refine classroom organisation, management and teaching practices, and
- to utilise effective assessment and reporting strategies.

Responses from first year teachers indicated that they had an understanding of the purposes of the Extended Practicum. They stated that the program allowed them to develop a positive rapport and working relationship with their supervising teachers, improve their self-confidence, flexibility, classroom management skills while it also assisted them in developing a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities of being a teacher.

In comparison, university staff indicated that the linking of theory and practice was much more important than other purposes of the extended practicum, with nine of the 20 comments relating to this purpose. However, only one supervising teacher mentioned this as a purpose of the practicum (in both the interviews and questionnaire), suggesting that supervising teachers did not consider this as an important purpose of the program. The integration of theory and practice was not stated as an objective (or purpose) in the ACU documentation provided to schools and students. The literature extensively discusses the role of the practicum in helping students to link theory with practice in the classroom (Chapman et al, 2003; Cooper & Orrell, 1997; Evers, 2005; Groundwater-Smith, 2000; Harvey, Silens & Saebel, 1999; Lugton, 2000; Martinez & Mackay, 2002; Orrell, 2001; PVETC, 2005; Ramsey, 2000), suggesting this is a significant purpose of the practicum, which this study has shown was not recognised by supervising teachers.

University staff identified the extended length as an important purpose of the extended practicum, with four of 20 comments relating to this issue, suggesting that it provided opportunities for pre-service teachers to undertake teaching for extended periods and which allowed them to take on greater responsibility prior to commencing full time teaching. This

purpose was not mentioned by supervising teachers. The literature also recognised this factor as a benefit of longer teaching blocks in schools (Brandenburg & Ryan, 2001; PVETC, 2005; Ramsey, 2000).

The extended practicum also assists pre-service teachers to understand and begin to develop their professional identity (Gardner & Williamson, 2002; Groundwater-Smith, 2002; McCarthy, 1996; Oxley, Howard & Johnson, 1999). Supervising teachers considered development as a professional member of the teaching profession (ten out of 40 responses) to be the second most important purpose of the extended practicum. This suggests that this experience helps student teachers to understand their roles and responsibilities within the school community, to develop an individual teaching style and to develop effective professional relationships in the school. This finding was reinforced in the semi-structured interviews with the supervising teachers. University staff made three comments, suggesting that professional development was a purpose of the extended practicum, thus agreeing to a lesser extent with supervising teachers regarding its importance. Of the six documented objectives of the extended practicum at ACU, one was to develop a deeper sense of professional responsibility and commitment as a purpose of the extended practicum (ACU, 2006).

The practicum also helps pre-service teachers to understand the role of the teacher and the demands of teaching (Ferrier-Kerr, 2003; Groundwater-Smith, 2002; Marsh, 2004; McInerney & McInerney, 2002). Exposure to a diversity of students, classes, and teaching and learning programs is also considered to be a further aim of the practicum (ATEA, 2002; Cooper & Jasmine, 2002; Eyers, 2005; Whitelaw, 1993). Supervising teachers suggested that a third aim of the extended practicum concerned the ability of pre-service teachers to gain an understanding of the demands and challenges of teaching, with five of the 40 comments relating to this area. This included teaching across the school community and understanding the complexities and issues involved in daily teaching. The university staff did not mention this

area in their responses, however, preparing student teachers for successful induction into full time teaching as a final objective of the extended practicum was another documented purpose of the extended practicum at ACU (2006).

The ability of pre-service teachers to develop a different way of thinking and learning is recognised by the literature as a further purpose of the practicum (Australian Council of Deans of Education, 2004; Martinez & Mackay, 2002; Orrell, 2001). This incorporates thinking independently, reflective thinking and developing an understanding of the need for life-long learning skills. These are recognised as higher level thinking skills than those generally required for undergraduate studies. Supervising teachers noted providing opportunities for self-evaluation and reflection about teaching strategies and techniques as a purpose of the practicum, with four of 20 comments relating to this area. University staff noted reflective practice in two comments out of 20 as a purpose of the practicum. Thus, both groups indicated this as a purpose of the extended practicum.

Finally, neither supervising teachers nor university staff suggested that the extended practicum confirmed the career choice of student teachers. While the literature states this is a purpose of the practicum, (Brandenburg & Ryan, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gore, 2004) it is not surprising that it is not mentioned in this study as the extended practicum is the final year of teacher training, and this issue should have been resolved in earlier years of the practicum.

Finally, the data from the present study suggests that while not all pre-service teachers were satisfied with the schools in which they were placed for the extended practicum, the current method of allocation does take into consideration their requests and is satisfactory, given the ongoing constraints of the program. Information also confirmed that the transition program undertaken at the end of the extended practicum is a worthwhile initiative, which the

student teachers found valuable. However, some duplication of content and the length of sessions needed to be reviewed.

The key finding relating to the aims and expectations of the extended practicum was that there appeared to be a disparity between the supervising teachers and university staff as to the overarching aims and purposes of the program. This is somewhat surprising as pre-service teachers, supervising teachers and university staff receive the same documentation from the university regarding the aims of the practicum, perhaps suggesting that it is not read by all of the participants, understood or agreed upon. This also suggests that communication between the key stakeholders is problematic. If there is not uniformity on the understanding of the purposes of the extended practicum, it is difficult to meet the stated aims of the program. Additionally, if supervising teachers and the university have conflicting understandings of the intended aims of the practicum this will cause confusion for the pre-service teachers, thus impacting on their capacity to learn.

It is therefore recommended that the purposes of extended practicum need to be clearly identified by stakeholder groups and this information uniformly disseminated to supervising teachers, pre-service teachers and university staff.

Table 6:1 provides a summary of findings in relation to research aim one.

Table 6:1 Summary of Findings in Relation to First Research Aim - Key Purposes of the Extended Practicum

Summary of findings	Recommendations	Implementation strategies
Disparity between supervising teachers and university staff regarding purposes of extended practicum (Key finding)	Purposes of the extended practicum need to be clearly identified and information uniformly disseminated to supervising teachers, students and university staff	Ongoing reference group of key stakeholders established to clarify and routinely review aims of the extended practicum
Supervising teachers put more emphasis on development of		Formal induction workshops provided by the university for supervising teachers to discuss aims and requirements of the extended practicum

<p>practical skills</p> <p>University staff saw the purpose in terms of linking theory with practice</p>		<p>University documentation to clearly identify aims of the extended practicum</p> <p>Documentation relating to the extended practicum distributed to all key stakeholders involved in the extended practicum</p>
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Research Question 2: Effectiveness of the Extended Practicum

Pre-service and first year teachers as well as teacher educators acknowledged that the practicum is one of the most important components of teacher training (Brady, et al, 1998; Brandenburg & Ryan, 2001; Lugton, 2000; Martinez, 1998; PVETC, 2005; Ramsey, 2000). During the practicum pre-service teachers are provided with opportunities to develop and practise teaching skills and professional competencies in a range of classroom settings. Many pre-service teachers in the present study recognised the value of the practicum and appreciated the opportunity to work with experienced teachers. Comments such as “the extended practicum was where I learnt most about teaching - the more the better I say” exemplified this feeling. The pre-service teachers generally were satisfied with many aspects of the extended practicum, suggesting “teaching experience made me ready for teaching” and “I saw the difference between theory and practice”.

However, during the extended practicum they also found that teaching was “not as easy as applying a set of instructions” to a given situation, and there were a number of issues that had an impact on its effectiveness. In recent times the practicum has been clearly identified as an area of teacher education in need of change (Lugton, 2000; PVETC, 2005; Ramsey, 2000). Therefore, it is important to understand how effectively the extended practicum in the Trescowthick School of Education (National), Melbourne assists pre-service teachers in developing their teaching skills and preparing them to enter the workforce, prior to implementing change.

In discussing the effectiveness or strengths of the extended practicum, this section focuses on three key areas that have been identified through this study and relates these to the literature. Firstly, it reviews how pre-service teachers, supervising teachers and university staff perceived the effectiveness and strengths of the extended practicum. Secondly, it reviews the adequacy of the preparation of student teachers to undertake the extended practicum, and thirdly, it discusses the quality of supervision provided during the extended practicum.

Strengths of the Extended Practicum

Most of the pre-service primary teachers considered that they had been successful in the teaching areas of behaviour management, classroom management, using a variety of teaching strategies, use of information technology, developing and extending lesson plans, planning for extended teaching practice, meeting student needs and using a variety of teaching aids. However, classroom management and using a range of teaching strategies presented some with difficulties. This is not surprising as these areas are regarded as two of the most challenging aspects of teaching today. This is due to the diversity of students in schools and the increasingly challenging demands of teaching, coupled with pre-service teachers requiring teaching techniques that are relevant, stimulating and use current technologies (Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick & Cragolini, 2002; Lugton, 2000; Orrell, Cooper & Jones, 1999; Turnbull, 2002).

Supervising teachers identified the major strength of the extended practicum as providing opportunities for professional development, as student teachers work as 'qualified' teachers and start to grow as professionals. Secondly, the length of the extended practicum allowed student teachers to establish themselves in schools and develop relationships with students, staff and others involved in the school community. Opportunities for teaching practice, organization and opportunities for student teachers to be reflective about their teaching practice were also noted

as further strengths. Supervising teachers therefore recognised that the extended practicum had a range of strengths, however, understanding the professional role and demands of being a teacher was considered as being a greater strength of the practicum than that of actual teaching practice in the classroom.

University staff rated the extended practicum as effective, noting that it enabled pre-service teachers to implement ideas from university and to consolidate and synthesize educational theory, that is, link theory with practice and provide opportunities for reflection. Secondly, they considered professional development and learning the realities and challenges of teaching was an important aspect of the extended practicum. Thirdly, the timing and length of the practicum was also considered important, as it was long enough for student teachers to complete assessment tasks and to develop confidence and competence in the classroom. However, one staff member considered that it had limited effectiveness.

Thus, while each stakeholder group believed that the extended practicum was effective, each group identified the practicum as having different strengths. The pre-service and first year teachers indicated they had been successful in their ability to manage the classroom and teach effectively. Supervising teachers stated that the greatest strength related more to professionalisation of students into the teaching profession, with actual teaching practice being the third noted strength. University staff indicated that the integration of theory with practice was the most important strength, but agreed with supervising teachers on the importance of understanding the role of a teacher. Both supervising teachers and university staff also noted that the length of the extended practicum was one of its strengths.

Overall, student teachers, first year teachers, supervising teachers and university staff recognised that the extended practicum demonstrated a range of strengths and acknowledged that it assisted student teachers to develop competence in the classroom, in the school and as a beginning teacher.

Preparation for Extended Practicum

Three areas are considered in analysing the effectiveness of preparation for the extended practicum. These areas are a) how well the academic component prepares pre-service teachers for the practicum, b) the documentation provided to both pre-service teachers and supervising teachers and c) the preparation of supervising teachers. These three areas impact significantly on the effectiveness of the extended practicum.

Academic preparation

It is important that the academic component of teacher education provides pre-service teachers with knowledge to support their school experiences (Brandenburg & Ryan, 2002; McInerney & McInerney, 2002; Turnbull, 2002). Most pre-service and first year teachers agreed that lectures prepared them well to understand both the placement and assessment requirements of the extended practicum. This suggests that information presented at lectures prior to the practicum was satisfactory.

However, some pre-service teachers who took part in the study felt unprepared for their professional responsibilities in schools. While these are discussed in lectures and documented on page 9 of the Extended Practicum Guideline Booklet (Appendix 6) many of these responsibilities vary between schools (for example, if pre-service teachers are expected to report to parents or undertake yard duty), thus it is not surprising that some pre-service teachers did not believe that the university had prepared them for these responsibilities. Approximately one quarter of the pre-service teachers surveyed did not feel well prepared to link theory with practice. The unit, Teaching and Classroom Management 1, (Appendix 7) introduces them to the basic skills of teaching and “incorporates preparation for professional experience in which strong links are established between the theoretical components and classroom practices in schools” (p. 2). While four said this unit was useful and assisted them in developing skills in

the classroom, others commented about their poor preparation for classroom teaching, relating to discipline and teaching methodology, again noting the disparity between theory and practice. Two pre-service teachers from the focus groups agreed that the resources and academic content they had received from the university were not adequate, useful, or up to date, thus, they did not feel well prepared. This suggests that the academic content may not be adequate to support the needs of pre-service teachers undertaking the extended practicum.

First year teachers provided a range of responses relating to the effectiveness of the Extended Practicum. They stated that units undertaken at ACU, (National), Trescowthick School of Education, Melbourne were closely related to work undertaken in schools. These teachers indicated that lectures at the university provided them with a range of effective classroom management skills that allowed them to use resources from the university in conjunction with those in the school. The first year teachers also believed that the extended length of the Extended Practicum created more time for the planning and preparation of their lessons. However, a number of first year teachers stated that the Extended Practicum, due to its poor organisation, often did not allow them to develop effective classroom management skills. Other areas of the Extended Practicum that posed problems for first year teachers included too many assessment tasks from the university, a greater need for more professional development, the need for ACU staff to visit schools more frequently, supervising teachers to be selected more stringently while the timing of the Extended Practicum required further examination both from a school and university perspective.

In both the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews supervising teachers indicated that pre-service teachers from ACU, (National), Trescowthick School of Education, Melbourne had a good understanding of their responsibilities in undertaking the extended practicum. They noted that the documentation and theoretical knowledge provided by the university assisted the pre-service teachers in their preparation for the practicum. However, when asked for

suggestions to improve the extended practicum five comments indicated that pre-service teachers generally were not well prepared for teaching, with six additional comments relating to the need for further theory to support their teaching. This suggests that while many believed that they had received a good academic underpinning to their teaching, some pre-service teachers and supervising teachers believed that the theoretical content could be improved, particularly relating to Curriculum Standard Frameworks (CSF), classroom management and lesson planning.

It is therefore recommended that academic content should be reviewed to ensure that student teachers are provided with up-to-date, relevant professional knowledge that adequately prepares them for the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching and will support their practice in the school. This review should be undertaken in collaboration with current practitioners. It is recommended that formal regular meetings should be conducted not only between teaching staff from the university, but also in partnership with pre-service teachers prior to undertaking the extended practicum. It is critical that these two stakeholders understand and share the roles, expectations and responsibilities required to undertake the practicum successfully from an academic and professional development perspective. The delivery of appropriate academic content is a critical component in the process of effective teacher education.

Documentation to support the extended practicum

Both the PVETC (2005) and the Ramsey Report (2000) noted the importance of providing clear documentation to support the extended practicum. They stated that this information should include clear expectations of both pre-service teachers, and supervising staff, and should also provide teachers with information related to the academic components of the course. This also assists supervising teachers to incorporate theory with the practicalities of teaching. However, findings from the present study suggest that this does not happen. The

ACU Trescowthick School of Education, (National), Melbourne Professional Experience Guideline Booklet (Appendix 6) is provided to all pre-service teachers and supervising teachers and is made available to university staff. Pre-service teachers in both focus groups stated that this guideline booklet was not user-friendly. They commented that it was inadequately documented and difficult to understand both from a supervising teacher and pre-service teacher perspective. Pre-service teachers were concerned with the lack of consistency, clarity and detail required for tasks to be undertaken as part of their assessment. They stated that the booklet should be reviewed, suggesting that it be more practical and less theoretical, more concise and with irrelevant content removed. A number of them also commented that their supervising teachers had not read the booklet, had difficulties understanding the directions or chose to not use it.

All 15 supervising teachers had received the booklet from ACU, (National), Trescowthick School of Education, Melbourne outlining the aims of the extended practicum, however, some could not name the document and others had not read it. This suggests that while distribution of the documentation relating to the practicum was adequate, supervising teachers may not pay enough attention to the document. When asked about support provided by the university, six supervising teachers commented that the guideline booklet prepared them well with clear and satisfactory guidelines however one supervising teacher indicated there was little explanation for new supervising teachers and suggested that this could be improved by greater collaboration with the university. Some teachers may have been supervising for a number of years and assumed that they did not need to re-read the documents, however, as aspects of the practicum change from year to year, this may mean that vital information is not taken into consideration during the practicum. University staff did not comment about the quality of the booklet. Thus, while supervising teachers suggested that the documentation

provided by the university was adequate, the pre-service teachers contradicted this, reporting that both they themselves and their supervising teachers did not find the booklet satisfactory.

It is recommended that that the current booklet is not serving the required purposes and is in need of review to ensure it is relevant, up-to-date and user-friendly for both pre-service teachers and supervisors. In addition, it should incorporate clear guidelines about expectations of both pre-service teachers, supervising teachers and university staff and information detailing academic components of the course relevant to the teaching practice.

Preparation for supervising teachers

While most pre-service teachers said their supervising teachers were excellent, their preparation for supervising student teachers during the extended practicum varied. Many of the pre-service teachers conceded that their supervising teachers were experienced in the supervisory process, providing them with useful information, resources and support, however six of the pre-service teachers in the focus groups said that their supervising teachers were poorly prepared to undertake the supervision of student teachers. As discussed earlier, they had not read the booklet, did not understand the requirements, or were not willing to follow the guidelines. The pre-service teachers also said that teachers need to be up to date and familiar with recent educational publications.

Five of the seven supervising teachers stated that the university did not prepare supervising teachers well to supervise students, suggesting improved communication was needed between the university and schools. While university staff agreed that supervising teachers were not always well prepared, they suggested that this preparation was the teachers' responsibility. These findings suggest there may be conflict about whose responsibility it is to adequately prepare supervising teachers with neither group taking on this responsibility. It is

critical that supervising teachers have a thorough understanding of the extended practicum both from a supervising and pre-service teachers' perspective as poor supervision can result in significant problems for pre-service teachers undertaking the extended practicum.

While many teachers have significant demands placed upon them from their schools, they are paid to supervise students, thus, they have made a commitment to the student, their school, the university and the program. However, if supervising teachers are poorly prepared to meet the requirements documented by ACU, (National), Trescowthick School of Education, Melbourne in their guideline booklet, this will compromise both the quality of the placement and the completion of students' academic requirements. The university must also take some responsibility to ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to supervise students.

Professional development has the potential for supervising teachers, university staff and student teachers to engage in dialogue, to examine their practices and take action to effect change (Komesaroff & White, 2002). It is critical that supervising teachers understand and are well prepared to implement all aspects of the extended practicum. Appearing to be unprepared for pre-service teachers may have an impact on their credibility and the level of confidence the student may have in them.

It is therefore recommended that the university provide ongoing professional development for supervising teachers that will provide information and skills to ensure they are able to competently supervise students. Attendance at these professional development activities should be compulsory for all teachers taking on the supervision of students and that completion of these activities be recognised and supported by both the schools and the university.

Quality of Supervision

While the identification of the effectiveness and strengths of the practicum and the level of preparation provided to pre-service teachers and supervising teachers have an impact on the effectiveness of the program, the quality of supervision provided to pre-service teachers is also a critical measure of the effectiveness of the extended practicum. This includes the quality of supervision provided by both teachers and the university. The quality of the partnerships between schools and the university also significantly affects the quality of supervision provided, thus these are discussed as part of the overall effectiveness of the extended practicum.

Quality of supervision: Supervising teachers

Once student teachers begin the practicum in schools the role of supervision moves from the university to the supervising teachers (Turnbull, 2002). These teachers play a critical role in providing professional guidance and support to pre-service teachers during the practicum (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Ingvarson, 2005; PVETC, 2005). The pre-service teachers who took part in the present study were positive in their comments regarding assistance provided by their supervising teachers, stating that they had been given quality supervision. Twenty-four positive comments stated that supervision was constructive, supportive, professional, and that supervisors had facilitated student teaching by providing resources and ideas, opportunities to plan and teach the curriculum and modelling effective teaching. Additionally, student teachers said that supervising teachers had provided useful feedback that motivated them and provided additional support through effective communication. Focus group two agreed that they had had excellent supervision, noting that being in a larger school had the benefit of more teachers available to provide assistance with

planning, and to model a different way of teaching. These comments suggested there are many teachers who are providing quality supervision to their students.

However, not all comments from pre-service teachers about their supervising teachers were positive (Turnbull, 2002; Zeichner, 1990). Negative comments related to supervising teachers having a poor understanding of the extended practicum, providing inadequate or poor feedback, limited linking of theory and practice, practice not being up to date and inadequate preparation for the practicum. Four of the pre-service teachers (in the questionnaire) suggested the need to select appropriate, experienced and committed teachers to supervise students and that the selection of supervising teachers should be monitored. They also suggested that pre-service teachers be given the opportunity to evaluate their teachers. Focus group two discussed the need for regular professional development for supervising teachers so as to keep them up to date on the purpose and content of the ACU booklet, “particularly if ACU staff were no longer going to visit students on rounds”.

It is possible that these negative responses may be due to increased demands on teachers and senior staff resulting in less time available to supervise pre-service teachers (Ingvarson, 2005; Lugton, 2000; Martinez, 1998; Ramsey, 2000; Turnbull, 2002). Many universities have difficulty in finding suitable teachers who are able and willing to provide quality practicum experiences for their students (Ingvarson, 2005). Resignations and retirements and the need for more placements have further reduced the pool of teachers available. Poor support from the university, (PVETC, 2005; Ramsey, 2000) limited commitment to the program, and out-dated practice also affect the quality of supervision.

While supervising teachers, pre-service teachers, first year teachers and university staff indicated that the extended practicum was a valuable component of teacher education, these stakeholder groups identified concern about the quality, selection and monitoring of some supervising teachers. Schools and universities need to work collaboratively to achieve this.

It is recommended that supervising teachers are supported by the university through the provision of ongoing training, support and resources which will equip them to competently supervise student teachers.

It is recommended that strategies are introduced to select and review experienced and qualified teachers to supervise student teachers.

Quality of supervision: University staff

ACU (National) Trescowthick School of Education staff no longer routinely visit pre-service teachers during the practicum, and this has resulted in the practicum becoming less of a priority of the university. This has also occurred at other universities and is due largely to recent government cutbacks to university funding and the increased costs associated with the practicum (Cooper & Orrell, 1997; Ramsey, 2000).

In the questionnaire, four student teachers suggested that the university should provide more support for them, suggesting that a university supervisor should visit schools during the extended practicum. Focus group one discussed changes to supervision and assessment requirements by the university staff during the extended practicum. They also expressed concern that they were not visited by the university staff during this practicum as they had been in earlier years. While this may not be possible in the current funding environment, the university must consider alternative and innovative ways that they can support pre-service teachers undertaking the practicum.

While one university staff member stated that the university provided all the necessary material to support teachers who were supervising students, five of the seven university staff considered that the university did not support supervising teachers adequately. This could include pre-practicum induction, (for example providing constructive feedback, or encouraging reflective practice) support and advice during the practicum and follow-up discussion after the

practicum. This could be most important if a student teacher has had an unsatisfactory placement. This ongoing support would be invaluable in ensuring student teachers were adequately supervised and that supervising teachers felt valued by the university. While it may not be possible for university staff to visit student teachers during the practicum, the university needs to make a greater commitment to work with student teachers and supervising teachers during the practicum (Cartwright, 2002; Gore, 2004; Ingvarson, 2005).

Six comments from the pre-service teachers suggested that there were problems with the profile and responsibilities of the University Professional Experience Coordinator, particularly noting the unavailability of this person. While this is a part-time position, it is an important role as it represents a crucial link between student teachers, the university and schools. Such partnerships need to be developed and nurtured to ensure the success of the practicum program. It is important that collaboration between the key stakeholders involved in the practicum is both encouraged and developed so that the quality of the practicum is not only maintained but also enhanced. The University Professional Experience Coordinator is integral to the ongoing viability of the program.

It is recommended that the university adopts a more collaborative role with schools in the management of the practicum and in the support of teachers undertaking the supervision of pre-service teachers during the practicum.

It is recommended that the Coordinator of Professional Experience at ACU, (National), Trescowthick School of Education, Melbourne develops and maintains a higher profile with pre-service teachers, university staff and teachers in schools and systems are implemented to effectively manage all issues related to the practicum.

Quality of supervision: Partnerships between schools and universities

Partnerships play a significant role in the practicum (Ferrier-Kerr, 2000; Wilson & Klein, 2001) with supervising teachers being critical partners in assisting student teachers to develop effective teaching practice (Battersby & Ramsey, 1990; Turnbull, 2002). Partnerships provide an important link between schools and universities. They form an integral component of pre-service teacher education that can be used effectively to provide beginning teachers with increased knowledge and understanding of how theory is translated to practice in the classroom (Chapman et al, 2000). However, these partnerships have been identified as problematic (Brandenburg & Ryan, 2001; Groundwater-Smith, 2002; Ling, 2001; PVETC, 2005; Ramsey, 2000). The literature identified the need for the development of more genuine partnerships between schools and universities and the staff within them who are involved in the conduct of professional experience programs (Brandenburg & Ryan, 2001; Ethell & McMeniman, 2000; PVETC, 2005; Ramsey, 2000).

In the present study, the pre-service teachers noted a number of issues that were influenced by poor communication and lack of understanding between their schools and the university. These included a poor understanding of the aims and responsibilities of the extended practicum, a lack of clarity of the university documentation, a disparity between the theory taught at the university and the realities of classroom teaching, a perceived limited support from university staff for student teachers during placement, excessive assessment which impacted on the pre-service teachers' capacity to complete both school-based and university tasks. In addition, the pre-service teachers recounted negative statements from supervising teachers about different aspects of the academic course, the lack of communication from the university to the schools and vice versa and perceived inconsistencies between what is taught at universities and what is required for teaching.

A particular example of the above named issues concerns the timing of the practicum. Supervising teachers, university staff, first year teachers and pre-service teachers all agreed that a most significant strength of the extended practicum was its length which allowed student teachers to establish themselves in schools and become familiar with staff and the school community, however, the timing was problematic. They both stated that towards the end of term when the full teaching program has finished, student teachers were engaged in end of term activities while teachers were busy completing school reports. This is not the best time for pre-service teachers to be assuming full-control of a classroom. Supervising teachers believed that the university needs to consider the schools more when deciding when the practicum will take place.

In addition, supervising teachers expressed a need for more support from the university relating to the organisation and operation of the practicum. The literature has suggested a number of ways in which supervising teachers can be supported. These include in-service programs, increased communication with the university and its practicum staff and better links generally between schools and the university (PVETC, 2005; Ramsey, 2000). Similar suggestions were identified when supervising teachers were asked for ideas to improve the practicum, with additional suggestions including improved information from the university, more information about university tasks required during the practicum and that supervising teachers be involved in an evaluation of the extended practicum. Turnbull (2002) argued that pre-service teachers need a program of supervision, which encourages and allows consultation and collaboration between key stakeholders involved in their teaching practice.

Graham & Thornley (2000) suggested that for partnerships to be successful, and for effective links to be made between theory and practice, a shared respect must be established between schools and the university. The roles and responsibilities of those involved in the teaching and learning process need to be clearly defined, understood and respected. These can

be facilitated through the use of effective communication and high levels of trust and respect (Chapman, 2000). While the rhetoric suggests that partnerships are established and effective, this study reinforced the findings of the PVETC (2005) and Ramsey (2000) that partnerships are not as effective as they could be and must be strengthened to ensure the ongoing viability of the practicum.

It is recommended that ACU reviews and strengthens its practical commitment to partnerships with schools so as to ensure that the practicum is a collaborative process that provides student teachers with excellent teaching experiences.

Table 6:2 illustrates the findings in relation to the second research aim.

Table 6:2 Summary of Findings in Relation to the Second Research Aim: Effectiveness of the Extended Practicum

Summary of findings	Recommendations	Implementation strategies
1. All stakeholders indicated the extended practicum adequately assisted student teachers in developing teaching competencies but identified some problems.	That problems be clearly identified and addressed.	That the practicum at ACU (including the extended practicum) be comprehensively reviewed.
2. Academic content does not prepare student teachers adequately for the extended practicum.	Academic content should provide up-to-date, relevant professional knowledge to prepare student teachers for the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching.	Regular reviews of the academic content and assessment of the practicum are undertaken by representatives from key stakeholder groups.
3. Practicum guideline booklet lacks clarity and is difficult to use.	University documentation relating to the practicum should be clear and user-friendly.	A reference committee of key stakeholders in the practicum review and revise the practicum guideline booklet.
4. Overall supervising teachers were satisfactory in supervising student teachers. However, in some instances supervising teachers were not experienced,	Selection strategies introduced to guide selection of supervising teachers. Supervising teachers should be reviewed regularly.	A committee representative of key stakeholders convened to develop guidelines for selection and review of supervising teachers. University induction programs presented for potential

<p>and committed to their tasks.</p>		<p>supervising teachers.</p> <p>Mentoring system to be established by schools to support supervising teachers.</p> <p>Regular student evaluation of extended practicum to be introduced.</p>
<p>5. Some supervising teachers are inadequately prepared to supervise student teachers.</p>	<p>Supervising teachers need to be familiar with their roles and responsibilities prior to undertaking the supervision of student teachers for the extended practicum.</p>	<p>University must provide ongoing professional development sessions for supervising teachers.</p> <p>Supervising teachers must attend these sessions prior to supervising student teachers.</p> <p>School coordinators need to regularly communicate with the university Professional Experience staff.</p>
<p>6. Lack of university support for student teachers during the practicum.</p> <p>Student teachers no longer visited by university staff resulting in reduced feedback and lack of assistance for students.</p>	<p>Students should have access to university staff during the practicum, eg via telephone or e-mail.</p> <p>A student list-serve organised by the university could provide students with peer support during the practicum.</p> <p>Students who are at risk or who have failed the extended practicum should be provided with a remediation program.</p>	<p>A committee convened to investigate and develop a range of resources and strategies to improve communication and support between the university and students during the practicum.</p>
<p>7. Poor profile of ACU Professional Experience Coordinator.</p>	<p>Profile of ACU Professional Experience Coordinator needs to be improved.</p>	<p>Roles and responsibilities of the Professional Experience Coordinator to be clearly defined.</p> <p>Effective ways of communication with student teachers, supervising teachers and staff established and disseminated to students.</p>

<p>8. Partnerships between stakeholders is in decline.</p>	<p>Partnerships between the key stakeholders (universities and schools) need to be improved and strengthened.</p>	<p>Establish a working party of key stakeholders in the practicum.</p> <p>Working party to meet regularly and report back to schools and the university.</p> <p>Develop partnership agreements to clarify roles, responsibilities and expectations for those involved in the practicum.</p> <p>Establish ways to include all key stakeholders in a formal, ongoing evaluation of the practicum.</p>
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Research Question 3: Linking Theory with Practice

During the academic phase of their teacher education program pre-service teachers are provided with theoretical foundations on which to base their thinking and practice in the classroom (Eyers, 2005; Lieberman & Miller, 1999; Orrell, Cooper & Jones (1999). The practicum provides them with opportunities to engage in an ongoing process of connecting theory to practice and vice versa, examining how they differ and how they are the same (Chapman et al, 2000; Cooper & Orrell, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Eyers, 2005; Groundwater-Smith, 2000; Harvey, Silens & Saebel, 1999; Orrell, 2001; PVETC, 2005; Ramsey, 2001). Working with supervising teachers allows pre-service teachers to share experiences and knowledge that support them in developing effective teaching practice (Goodlad, 1990; Toomey, et al. 2005). This assists pre-service teachers significantly in bridging the gap between theory and practice. However, this link is one of the most contentious issues of teacher education (Brady, Segal, Bamford & Deer, 1998; Churchill & Williamson, 2002) and is

central to current national and international policy documents (Lugton, 2000; Martinez & Mackay, 2002; PVETC, 2005).

Beginning teachers often fail to understand the relationship between what they have studied at university and how this is transformed into effective classroom learning and teaching in the school (Gray & Renwick, 1998; Komesaroff & White, 2002; Zeichner, 1990). This may be a result of the daily demands of classroom teaching, (Graham & Thornley, 2000), of pedagogical knowledge which conflicts with the realities of teaching (Ingvarson, 2005; Leiminer, 2001) or lack of communication, understanding or respect between schools and the university. The literature further suggests that universities are too theory driven (Jasman, 1996; PVETC, 2005; Ramsey, 2000).

In the present study, the majority of pre-service teachers (thirty one out of 40) agreed that they were well prepared to link theory with practice, although nine indicated that they were not well prepared in this area. In a further question, two pre-service teachers stated that their supervising teachers did not effectively emphasise the significance of linking theory and practice, adding that they considered that the theory taught at the university was inadequate, different, or not compatible with what the supervising teacher believed. There was also some indication that supervising teachers believed that universities did not understand the 'real world' of teaching and that some of the content taught at universities did not relate to teaching in the classroom. If the supervising teacher does not support or use the approaches taught at the university it is very difficult for student teachers to understand these links. This issue was discussed in the focus groups with several pre-service teachers indicating they had to put aside what they had learnt at the university and teach as directed by the supervising teacher, fearing that their assessment could be compromised.

The theoretical component of the practicum, Teaching and Classroom Management 2 introduces pre-service teachers to the basic skills of teaching prior to, and during the extended

practicum, thereby endeavouring to establish links between the theoretical components and classroom practice. However, if supervising teachers are not familiar with what is being currently taught at university and if university staff are removed from the realities of the classroom, it is difficult for these links to be made. Improved communication between schools and the university about content taught at university would enable teachers to facilitate integration of theory and practice.

While the majority of the 15 supervising teachers agreed that students from ACU were able to link theory and practice, three suggested that the student teachers ability to translate theory of classroom management into practice was more difficult. This may be related to poor supervision of pre-service teachers who experience difficulties with their teaching, however classroom management is acknowledged as a challenging aspect of teaching (Cooper & Orrell, 1997; Turnbull, 2002). The theory and practice link was not elaborated upon during the semi-structured interviews with supervising teachers. These results suggest that while supervising teachers are generally satisfied with the ability of student teachers to relate theory to practice, they did not consider this was a major aim of the extended practicum.

First year teachers stated that the extended practicum allowed them to link theory with practice more effectively in their teaching, as well providing more time for discussion with their fellow teachers. Conversely, a number of these first year teachers indicated that some units at the university, and in particular, Teaching and Classroom Management did not prepare them in being able to relate theory with practice.

In comparison, university staff stated that the most significant aim of the extended practicum was linking theory with practice. They also noted the value of linking university assessment tasks from theory to classroom practice in “an authentic setting”, applying the research project to Key Learning Areas in school settings and opportunities for consolidating and synthesizing inclusive pedagogies during the extended practicum. Five of the seven

university staff stated that the extended practicum was satisfactory in enabling student teachers to translate theory into practice however two stated that it had limitations. While they recognised that the practicum provided a range of opportunities to translate theory to practice, they noted that this depended on whether the supervising teacher's practice complemented what was currently being taught at the university. University staff also considered the opportunity for student teachers to link theory with practice as one of the best features of the extended practicum. They considered that academic work, particularly the research tasks, "can inform what they do in the classroom". Additionally, university staff said the placement of the practicum between academic components facilitated this linking and allowed "opportunities for reflection following the practicum".

Results from the present study indicated that generally, pre-service teachers, first year teachers, supervising teachers and university staff agreed that the extended practicum enabled students to satisfactorily link the theoretical concepts learnt at university to teaching practice in the classroom. However, the importance of this component of the extended practicum varied between these groups. However, major teacher employing bodies including the Department of Education and Training (DET), Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) and the Association of Independent Schools (ASIV) have stated that pre-service teachers "had very limited knowledge in lesson planning skills, assessment and reporting (PVETC, 2005, p. 106). They considered it essential that the links between theoretical and practical training needed to be strengthened between universities and schools. The question also about how integration of theory and practice is achieved and the implications for both the theoretical component of teaching and the extended practicum needs to be further explored.

How are Theory and Practice Linked?

The literature discusses how the linking of theory and practice can be achieved (Cooper & Orrell, 1997; Graham & Thornley, 2000; Martinez & Mackay, 2002; Ramsey, 2001). It suggests that this incorporation of theory into practice may occur more effectively if practice is undertaken in a realistic context. Additionally the theory being learnt should be applied concurrently with teaching practice (Lugton, 2000). For this to occur student teachers must be provided with structured opportunities that allow them to integrate learning between university and schools (Groundwater-Smith, Cusworth & Dobbins, 1998). Structured activities for student teachers to complete during their practicum can create opportunities to incorporate knowledge from university into practice (Martinez & Mackay (2002). Additionally, educational theory can be applied in a practical manner through activities such as reflective practice, constructive feedback and problem solving (PVETC, 2005).

The integration of theory and practice may be achieved through the use of activities and assessments (Martinez & Mackay (2002). During the extended practicum pre-service teachers from ACU, (National), Trescowthick School of Education, Melbourne, are required to complete a range of academic assessment tasks based on their school experience. These require them to integrate theory with practice. While generally the pre-service teachers considered that they were able to integrate theory with practice, none mentioned the assessment tasks as assisting them to do this. Seven commented that the time required to complete these tasks was excessive and compromised teaching time. Focus group one agreed that there was too much university work to be completed during the extended practicum, stating that assessment would be better placed following the practicum. This concern was compounded by the fact that some completed required assessment tasks were not checked nor given feedback. Of the seven university staff involved in setting these tasks, only four staff stated they were beneficial, with three stating they had limited benefit. They suggested that the research experiences allow

student teachers to apply theoretical concepts to a practical situation, and facilitate reflection on teaching. However, they acknowledged that these research projects “added unfairly to an existing heavy workload”, particularly if they were not related to teaching and that links regarding the research projects between university and schools were limited. Supervising teachers agreed that assessment tasks were excessive, suggesting that they be reduced or shared between the student teachers. This would allow them to focus more on teaching practice in the classroom.

Another way of linking theory with practice is through reflection (Cordingley, 1999; Ewing & Smith, 2002; Lugton, 2000; Turnbull, 2002). Reflective practice makes it possible to understand the connection between what is being studied and its application to the classroom (Cordingley, 1999, p. 4). In the present study supervising teachers, university staff, first year teachers and student teachers all agreed that opportunities for reflection of work undertaken during the practicum and at the university would assist them in bridging the gap between theory and practice. However, pressure to undertake planning and teaching activities and complete university assessment tasks often meant that there was limited time to reflect on the theoretical frameworks underpinning teaching practice. Furthermore, supervising teachers often have limited time and skills to facilitate reflection with pre-service teachers.

An added problem that impacted on student teachers’ ability to link theory with practice was that there is minimal contact with university staff during the practicum (Ingvarson, Beavis & Kleinhenz, 2004). Thus, lecturers from the university are rarely available to provide information, feedback or support to the pre-service teachers during this time. In the present study, university staff appeared to believe that what is taught at the university can be transferred to teaching practice in schools through the set academic tasks which required student teachers to integrate theory with what they are currently undertaking in the classroom. They may also assume that supervising teachers were well qualified to demonstrate, explain

and facilitate their teaching practice supported by theory. While it is important that supervising teachers are able to work with student teachers to facilitate this integration explicit connections between university and school knowledge are more likely to occur when university and supervising teachers' support each other's work.

Thus, while structured activities, reflective practice and effective supervision can assist student teachers to link theory to practice, a significant commitment of both time and effort from both teachers and the university, working collaboratively, is required to support this linkage. Furthermore, a shared respect and understanding of theoretical and practical knowledge needs to exist between staff in both schools and the university.

It is therefore recommended that linking theory to practice requires an increased focus to bridge the gap between what is taught at the university and what is learned in the classroom. This includes both university and school-based strategies that facilitate this integration.

Table 6:3 illustrates the findings in relation to the third research aim.

Table 6:3 Summary of Findings in Relation to the Third Research Aim: Linking Theory with Practice

Summary of findings	Recommendations	Implementation strategies
Some student teachers have difficulties linking theory to practice.	Linking theory to practice requires increased focus to bridge the gap between what is taught at the university and what is taught in the classroom.	Develop strategies to help student teachers to make links between theory and practice. This may include assessment, reflection and feedback.
Disparity between theory taught at university and teaching practice.	Ensure that schools know what is taught at university The university should be aware of the programs being used in schools and current issues impacting on schools.	Provide schools with up-to date curriculum content Every university lecturer should spend (professional development) time in schools to maintain teaching contact and

		professional credibility.
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Research Question 4: Implications for the Extended Practicum

The future implications for the continuation of the extended practicum in the pre-service primary degrees in the Trescowthick School of Education, (ACU National), Melbourne are discussed based on the data generated by the previous three research questions. These implications are also considered in the context of the environment in which the extended practicum takes place and the experiences necessary for pre-service teachers prior to graduating and being registered as qualified teachers.

The present study has found that while the extended practicum demonstrates a number of strengths and is currently meeting the needs of pre-service teachers, a number of problems exist that have had an impact on the quality of the experience. Firstly, a disparity exists between key stakeholders regarding the purposes of the extended practicum. Secondly the preparation of pre-service teachers, the documentation provided by the university and the preparation and support for supervising teachers by the university is currently not satisfactory. Thirdly, the quality of supervision from both school-based teachers and university staff could be improved. This relates to the quality of partnerships existing between schools and the university that should support each other in providing a coordinated and professional program for student teachers. Finally, the ability of student teachers to effectively integrate theory and practice during the practicum could be further improved.

If the extended practicum is to continue as a viable and worthwhile component of the pre-service degrees, the problems noted above need to be addressed. The recommendations outlined by bodies such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT, 2002) and the Parliament of Victoria Education and Training Committee (PVETC, 2005) relating to the practicum should be incorporated into a review of this program. Furthermore, input from key stakeholders,

namely, schools, supervising teachers, students, first year teachers and university staff should be incorporated in the review process.

The practicum (and in particular the extended practicum) is an integral component of teacher education at ACU (National), Melbourne. The Trescowthick School of Education, ACU, Melbourne, has a responsibility to the teaching profession generally to provide a program of teacher education that demonstrates responsibility, respect and vision from a local, national and international perspective. If the university fails to recognise and address the issues identified in this study, the status of the extended practicum will be further weakened. If both student teachers and supervising teachers are not adequately prepared or supported to undertake the extended practicum schools may be reluctant to accept student teachers from ACU, (National) in the future. This could ultimately affect the viability of the extended practicum program.

Conclusion

This chapter has returned to the four research questions and reviewed them in light of the findings of the study and the literature. The key stakeholders in this research acknowledged the importance of the extended practicum in the teacher education program under review. However, a number of concerns and subsequent implications have resulted as a consequence of this study. At the conclusion of each research question a summary of findings was presented. Specific recommendations and possible implementation strategies for each recommendation have been outlined. The discussion of question four considers these recommendations and the implications for them at ACU Melbourne.

The final chapter of this thesis provides an overview of the findings and the recommendations emerging from this study. It also discusses the limitations of the study, and suggests further research in this area.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The aim of this study was to conduct an investigation into the extended practicum in the Bachelor of Education undergraduate and post graduate degrees in the Trescowthick School of Education, ACU, (National), Melbourne. The study aimed to explore the effectiveness of the extended practicum in meeting its stated aims, whether the preparation of student teachers and supervising teachers was satisfactory, and whether the extended practicum enabled student teachers to link the theoretical components of their course with classroom practice.

The purpose of this chapter is to present a tabular summary of the findings and recommendations of the study, to provide principles for a full evaluation of the extended practicum and to discuss the significance and limitations of the study. Finally, this chapter suggests ideas for further research that will add to the body of knowledge on the role, function and management of the practicum in teacher education.

The findings of this study suggest that while the current practicum provides pre-service teachers with a range of valuable learning experiences, there are many aspects of the extended practicum in the particular context in which this research took place that need to be addressed to ensure its continued effectiveness.

Table 7:1 provides a summary of the key findings for each of the research questions and the recommendations that emerge from each finding. Strategies for implementation of each recommendation are also provided.

Refer to File: Summary of Findings Table Document

Refer to File: Summary of Findings Table Document

Refer to File: Summary of Findings Table Document

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Refer to File: Summary of Findings Table Document

Refer to File: Summary of Findings Table Document

These findings suggest that a formal evaluation of the extended practicum be undertaken by the Trescowthick School of Education, ACU, (National), Melbourne in view of the responses received from the key stakeholders who took part in this study. It is also important that this program be considered as a process of adaptation in which teacher educators need to reconceptualise their work so as to meet the challenges of preparing pre-service teachers to work in a climate of constant change and unpredictability. Research literature and this study in particular also argue a compelling case for restructuring the practicum so that it enables pre-service teachers not only to focus on classroom teaching skills but also to apply theoretical knowledge to their professional practice. It is also critical that the data analysed from the research questions supports the work undertaken by professional teaching bodies such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching and the recommendations outlined by the recent Parliament of Victoria Education and Training Committee (PVETC, 2005). To this extent, the implications for the practicum generally, and, more specifically, the extended practicum which was the focus of this work, are critical and significant.

Principles to Guide a Formal Evaluation of the Practicum

The following principles have been distilled from the findings of the study and they are recommended to guide an extensive evaluation of the extended practicum at the Trescowthick School of Education at ACU, (National), Melbourne.

1. The practicum must be considered in the context of the total teacher education program.
2. Principles of adult learning must be incorporated into the practicum.
3. The practicum integrates three key knowledge areas – content knowledge, professional knowledge and teaching skills. These three areas of initial teacher education all need to be incorporated in an evaluation of the practicum.

4. Staff involved in the extended practicum both in schools and at ACU (National) are regarded by the teaching profession as qualified, experienced and capable of influencing the development of teacher education.
5. Recommendations from recent reviews of teacher education, including the PVETC (2005), VIT (2002) and the present study should be incorporated into the evaluation of the extended practicum.
6. The practicum incorporates partnerships between the university and schools. These partnerships are critical to the success of the practicum program and must be developed and nurtured.
7. Guidelines should be established for the selection and on-going review of supervising teachers.
8. Supervising teachers should be provided with resources, clear information, support and professional development from the university.
9. Assessment of pre-service teachers should relate to the stated objectives of the practicum and should encourage them to link theory to practice.
10. Provision should be made for future feedback on the effectiveness of the extended practicum from all stakeholders.

Significance of the Research

This research is timely in that many of its findings mirror those of the Ramsey Review (2000) and the findings of the Parliament of Victoria Education and Training Committee (2005). Given the significance these reviews attached to the professional practice component in the preparation of beginning teachers, it is appropriate that Australian Catholic University, (Melbourne) considers a comprehensive review of its extended practicum.

This research has made a significant contribution to the university in which the case study was set, in that it highlighted areas for consideration in reviewing the program. It is expected that this research will be of assistance to pre-service, beginning and experienced teachers and university staff who are involved in supervising student teachers. It is further anticipated that this research will prove to be valuable in the development and implementation of practicum programs related to the delivery of effective professional development not only for individual teachers, but also for schools and tertiary institutions. This research also adds to the body of the research available to other Australian universities and to education authorities and organizations committed to the continuing improvement of primary teacher education. Thus, the research findings are useful in ensuring that pre-service teacher education is able to meet the increasing demands and challenges of teaching in the twenty-first century.

Contribution to Knowledge

Teacher education in Australia is currently subject to much discussion and debate within the teaching profession. Teacher education, and in particular, the practicum has taken on new directions as it addresses the development and changes to commerce, technology and culture, amid a climate of declining financial responsibility from governments. It is critical that the learning environment supports initiatives that offer visionary and responsive approaches that influence the advancement of knowledge in teacher education.

Knowledge forms an integral part of the education system whether it be in schools, universities or the community generally. It is important that those involved in teacher education, and in particular the extended practicum, are able to discuss, integrate and expand their level of expertise with fellow professionals across a wider spectrum. It is critical that these factors are able to provide flexibility, increased responsibility and understanding in all

areas of education. Knowledge should be shared willingly and with optimism. The research reported in this thesis provides new knowledge upon which the practicum in teacher education programs may be evaluated.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to the experiences of students undertaking their fourth and final year of the Bachelor of Education or 2nd year Postgraduate Bachelor of Education, the teachers who supervised them and staff responsible for teaching units in the extended practicum at Australian Catholic University, (Melbourne). However, while the results of this study may not be generalised to any other university, teacher education organisations or group of students, they may provide principles upon which other universities may build their own investigation.

The small number of respondents may also be seen as a limitation, but processes to address this have been explained in Chapter three. The low numbers of supervising teachers who responded may reflect their lack of interest they have with university-based activities. If this is the case it upholds a key finding of the research about the lack of understanding between the groups.

Nevertheless, the variety and depth of responses make this a credible and useful case study of the Extended Practicum at the Trescowthick School of Education, (National), Melbourne.

Suggestions for Further Research

Further studies of the practicum and in particular, the extended practicum will add to the body of knowledge in this important area of teacher education. The responses from

participants reflected a moral or ethical element that demonstrated their commitment and responsibility in acknowledging the significance of the practicum from an individual and group perspective. A study that concentrated more fully on graduates undertaking their first year of teaching would be appropriate as it would provide further valuable insights into the connection of schools and the university. It would be desirable that a greater number of supervising teachers, university staff and students (where possible) be included in any future studies relating to the practicum, as it would provide greater depth and experience from participants. It is also recommended that the results of this study be embedded within the future structures and development of the practicum at ACU National generally, but more specifically, the extended practicum.

Conclusion

For the practicum to be recognised as an integral aspect of teacher education, it is imperative that it be seen as the responsibility of both schools and universities. The practicum needs to be continually resourced, valued and promoted across the wider education community, as well as utilising competent teachers who are willing to share experiences with pre-service teachers and staff in universities. It is critical that the practicum provide opportunities for pre-service teachers that will link theory with practice and translate their perceptions of teaching into reality.

Despite extensive knowledge available on the extended practicum, there remains a lack of understanding from a number of the key stakeholders who participated in this program about a number of aspects related to the program. Data gathered from the key stakeholders suggested there was a need to review the extended practicum so as to improve the experience for pre-service teachers and enhance positive links between the university and its partnership

schools. In the current educational climate it is important to introduce more frequent and robust professional development programs that will address current problems both from a university and school perspective, thus raising the quality and profile of the extended practicum within teacher education programs at Australian Catholic University, Melbourne. The research reported in this thesis has provided foundational principles which can guide and inform an evaluation of the extended practicum.

Finally, the contribution of this research merges and integrates the field of knowledge within teacher education in Australia. In particular, it focused on the development of the practicum within the realm of teacher education. The practicum in the twenty-first century is a critical aspect of teacher education as it evolves within a climate of unpredictability, reconceptualisation and change.

APPENDIX 1: AUSTRALIA CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY (NATIONAL) CAMPUS LOCATIONS



ACT

Canberra – Signadou Campus

QUEENSLAND

Brisbane- Mc Auley Campus

NEW SOUTH WALES

Sydney - North Sydney Campus
- Strathfield Campus

VICTORIA

Ballarat – Aquinas Campus
Melbourne – St. Patricks Campus

APPENDIX 2: STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

POST PLACEMENT SURVEY: THE EXTENDED PRACTICUM STUDENT TEACHERS

This survey is an evaluation of the Extended Practicum at Australian Catholic University Melbourne.

Information collected will be treated confidentially.

Demographic Data (Please circle appropriate category)

Gender	Male		Female	
Age Group	21-25	26-30	31-39	40-50

Question 1. The allocation process undertaken by the Professional Placement Officer at the University regarding my placement in schools was satisfactory.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Give reasons for your response

Question 2. My lectures prepared me well for the following dimensions of my practicum placement. (Please tick appropriate box).

Dimensions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Understanding of placement requirements (preparation, observation, duration etc)				
Assessment procedures (university-school, assessment, student etc)				
Professional responsibilities (appearance, yard-duty, parents, meetings etc)				
Linking theory with practice in the classroom (lesson content, knowledge, timing lessons, integrating content etc)				

Question 3. During your time in the classroom: “How successful were you in:

	Not very	Successful	Very
a. Behaviour management	1	2	3
b. Classroom management	1	2	3
c. Using a variety of teaching strategies	1	2	3
d. Use of information technology	1	2	3
e. Developing and extending lesson plans	1	2	3
f. Planning for extended teaching periods	1	2	3
g. Meeting students needs	1	2	3
h. Using a variety of teaching aids	1	2	3

Question 4. During the Extended Practicum comment on how the following people assisted you.

a. Your supervising teacher

b. The Professional Experience Coordinator

Question 5. Please provide any other comments you have about the Extended Practicum Program (EDFX 400).

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION

APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS



Australian Catholic
University Limited
ABN 15 050 192 660
Melbourne Campus St. Patrick's
115 Victoria Parade
Fitzroy Vic 3065
www.acu.edu.au

INFORMATION LETTER TO STUDENT TEACHERS

TITLE OF PROJECT: Developing Better Practice for Beginning Primary Teachers: The Significance of the Practicum.

STAFF SUPERVISOR: Dr Kath Engebretson

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Mr John Elligate

COURSE: EDD

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in research on The Extended Practicum. This research will enable you to make some comments regarding various aspects of this program.

This project will investigate a number of aspects of the Extended Practicum. Participation in this research study is voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any stage without giving a reason. Confidentiality will be maintained during the study and in any report of the study. All participants will be given a code and names will not be retained with the data. Individual participants will not be able to be identified in any reports of the study, as only aggregated data will be reported. The storage and disposal of information is controlled by the code of ethics of ACU.

You will be required to complete a questionnaire, which will take approximately twenty minutes to complete.

I have been granted ethics approval by the University. This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University. In the event that you have any complaints or concerns about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Student Researcher and Staff Supervisor have not been able to satisfy, you may write to:

Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee

C/o Research Services

Australian Catholic University

Locked Bag 4115

FITZROY VIC 3065

Tel: 03 9953 3157

Fax: 03 9953 3315

Any complaint will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you are willing to participate please sign the attached informed consent forms. You should sign both copies of the consent form and return one copy for your records and return the other copy to the principal investigator.

Your support for the research project will be most appreciated. At this stage you are free to ask any questions regarding the project.

If you have any questions about the project, before or after participating, please contact the Principal Supervisor, Dr Kath Engebretson, on telephone number 99533292 in the Trescowthick School of Education St. Patrick's Campus, (Australian Catholic University, 115 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy 3065).

Would you be willing to participate in a Focus Group Study of 6-8 students which would require approximately 50 minutes of your time? **(If so, please indicate below)**

This activity would be conducted at ACU approximately two weeks following the completion of this questionnaire and at a time convenient to you.

Name _____ Phone Contact _____

John Elligate
Student Researcher

Dr Kath Engebretson
Principal Supervisor

INFORMATION LETTER FOR SUPERVISING TEACHERS



Australian Catholic
University Limited
ABN 15 050 192 660
Melbourne Campus St. Patrick's
115 Victoria Parade
Fitzroy Vic 3065
www.acu.edu.au

TITLE OF PROJECT: Developing Better Practice for Beginning Primary Teachers. The Significance of the Practicum.

STAFF SUPERVISOR: Dr Kath Engebretson

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Mr John Elligate

COURSE: EDD

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You will be required to complete a questionnaire, which will take approximately twenty minutes to complete. In addition, you will be invited to participate in a semi-structured interview which will take approximately 45 minutes. This interview will be arranged at a time convenient with you.

I have been granted ethics approval by the University. This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University. In the event that you have any complaints or concerns about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Student Researcher and Staff Supervisor have not been able to satisfy, you may write to:

Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee
C/o Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Locked Bag 4115
FITZROY VIC 3065
Tel: 03 9953 3157 Fax: 03 9953 3315

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John Elligate
Student Researcher

Dr Kath Engebretson
Principal Supervisor

INFORMATION LETTER FOR UNIVERSITY STAFF



Australian Catholic
University Limited
ABN 15 050 192 660
Melbourne Campus St. Patrick's
115 Victoria Parade
Fitzroy Vic 3065
www.acu.edu.au

TITLE OF PROJECT: Developing Better Practice for Beginning Primary Teachers. The Significance of the Practicum.

STAFF SUPERVISOR: Dr Kath Engebretson

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Mr John Elligate

COURSE: EDD

Dear Participant

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This project will investigate a number of aspects of the Extended Practicum. Participation in this research study is voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any stage without giving a reason. Confidentiality will be maintained during the study and in any report of the study. All participants will be given a code and names will not be retained with the data. Individual participants will not be able to be identified in any reports of the study, as only aggregated data will be reported. The storage and disposal of information is controlled by the code of ethics of ACU.

You will be required to complete a questionnaire, which will take approximately twenty minutes to complete. In addition, you will be invited to participate in a semi-structured interview which will take approximately 45 minutes. This interview will be arranged at a time convenient with you.

I have been granted ethics approval by the University. This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University. In the event that you have any complaints or concerns about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Student Researcher and Staff Supervisor have not been able to satisfy, you may write to:

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If you are willing to participate please sign the attached informed consent forms. You should sign both copies of the consent form and return one copy for your records and return the other copy to the principal investigator. Your support for the research project will be most appreciated. At this stage you are free to ask any questions regarding the project.

If you have any questions about the project, before or after participating, please contact the Staff Supervisor, Dr Kath Engebretson, on telephone number 99533292 in the Trescowthick School of Education (St. Patrick's Campus), at Australian Catholic University, 155 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy, 3065.

John Elligate
Student Researcher

Dr Kath Engebretson
Principal Supervisor

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (FOR STUDENTS, SUPERVISING TEACHERS & STUDENTS)



Australian Catholic University
Melbourne Campus St. Patrick's
115 Victoria Parade
Fitzroy Vic 3065
www.acu.edu.au

COPY FOR PARTICIPANT

TITLE OF PROJECT: Developing Better Practice for Beginning Primary Teachers. The Significance of the Practicum.

STAFF SUPERVISOR: Dr Kath Engebretson

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Mr John Elligate

COURSE: EDD

Participant section

I have read and understood the information in the letter inviting participation in the research, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I can withdraw at any time.

I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way. I agree to be contacted by telephone if needed to arrange a mutually convenient time to complete the research task. I agree that information gained from questionnaires and semi – structured interviews may be audio recorded.

Name of participant: Phone:
(block letters)

Signature: Date:

Research Student: Mr John Elligate

Signature: Date:

Staff Supervisor: Dr Kath Engebretson

Signature: Date:

APPENDIX 4. QUESTIONNAIRE SUPERVISING TEACHERS

**POST PLACEMENT SURVEY: THE EXTENDED PRACTICUM
SUPERVISING TEACHERS**

This survey is an evaluation of the Extended Practicum at Australian Catholic University (Melbourne). All information collected will be treated confidentially.

Demographic Data (Circle the appropriate response)

Gender Male Female
Age Group 21 – 25 26-30 31-39 40-55

Postcode: _____

1. Did you receive documentation from ACU (Melbourne), which informed you of the major aims of the Extended Practicum? (Circle appropriate response)

Yes No

If yes please indicate the name of the document.

2. What do you consider to be the three (3) most important aims of the Extended Practicum?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

3. Students from ACU (Melbourne) generally understand their responsibilities in relation to the Extended Practicum in schools.

(Circle which best reflects your assessment)

High Understanding

Satisfactory Understanding

Poor Understanding

4. To what extent did student teachers from ACU translate the theory of teaching into practice in your classroom?

High

Satisfactory

Limited

Unsatisfactory

5. To what extent do student teachers from ACU (Melbourne) translate the theory of classroom management into practice in your classroom?

High

Satisfactory

Limited

Unsatisfactory

6. What would you regard as the two greatest strengths of the Extended Practicum at ACU?

1. _____

2. _____

7. You are invited to suggest two (2) practical recommendations, which could make the Extended Practicum more effective for student teachers.

1. _____

2. _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION

APPENDIX 5. ETHICS APPROVAL

APPENDIX 5. ETHICS APPROVAL

**APPENDIX 6. TRECOWTHICK SCHOOL OF EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL
EXPERIENCE GUIDELINE BOOKLET**

Australian Catholic University

Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



**TRECOWTHICK
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION (Vic.)**

Professional Experience Program

**Bachelor of Education
Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Teaching
EDFX404**

**GUIDELINE BOOKLET
FOR STUDENT TEACHERS,
SUPERVISING TEACHERS
& STUDENT TEACHER COORDINATORS**

AQUINAS CAMPUS
PO Box 650
Ballarat 3353
Phone: 5336 5324
Fax: 5336 5325

ST PATRICK'S
CAMPUS
Locked Bag 4115
Fitzroy 3065
Phone: 9953 3251
9953 3252
Fax: 9495 6149

EDFX404: Professionalism - The Student Teacher **as a Staff Member** **- Reflection on the Practice of Teaching**

This is the final phase of the student teacher's course of preparation for teaching. This phase is designed to introduce the student teacher to the responsibilities of a beginning teacher and to school life within the context of a fully participating staff member.

The student teacher will spend an extended period of time in schools where they will be the major contributor to planning and implementation of the full teaching program and management of their assigned grade.

STRUCTURE OF THE ROUND

The school-based component of this round has two distinct parts:

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Part A (June) | - Observation and Preparation | - Week 1 |
| | - Preparation and Supervised teaching | - Week 2 |
| Part B (Aug-Sept) | - Supervised Teaching Component | - Six weeks |

During this phase of teacher education, student teachers are encouraged to work in a collegial and collaborative manner with their peers. It is requested that the student teachers be allocated one hour per week in order to meet with each other to reflect collaboratively on their observations and experiences.

In the case of only one student teacher being assigned to a school, we ask that, where feasible, the supervising teacher or Student Teacher Coordinator provides collegial support for the weekly reflective task.

PART A - OBSERVATION AND PREPARATION WEEKS

This is the time for the student teacher to become acquainted with his/her class, pupils' names, pupils' behavioural differences and special needs, their scholastic achievements, etc.

It is also a valuable opportunity for the student teacher to observe his/her supervising teacher in action, noting methods of teaching, classroom management, organisational techniques and discipline strategies. In summary, the student teacher utilises this time to observe systematically, strategies which are effective in the management and organisation of this particular grade.

During Week 2, the student teacher should take this opportunity to prepare and organise in conjunction with the supervising teacher relevant programs and topics for the six-week supervised experience. Teaching activities are encouraged in order to familiarise the student teacher with the pupils' individual learning needs.

This Extended Practicum experience is designed to facilitate theory into practice. Student teachers will be required to implement some tasks set by University staff during this time. These tasks are designed to enable the student teacher to better understand the pupil's background to learning. (Where applicable, the student teachers have handouts outlining these tasks).

Finally it is anticipated that this time will allow the student teacher to develop and establish an appropriate professional rapport with those with whom he/she will work and to have completed adequate preparation in order to commence the recommended teaching program in August-September.

GUIDE FOR OBSERVATION AND PREPARATION WEEKS

Part A – Two-week component

All observations should be recorded in a teaching plan folder and be available to the supervising teacher and, where necessary, university personnel.

TASK 1 - Observation & Preparation

During the observation and preparation weeks allocated to this round, the student teacher should observe and record information concerning the following:

TEACHING STRATEGIES:

- strategies your supervising teacher considers appropriate for this class eg. group work, cooperative learning organisation, teaching approaches, questioning techniques

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT:

- strategies employed
- rules and routines
- strategies to deal with pupils who exhibit behavioural problems
- reward/consequences
- motivation

TEACHING TECHNIQUES:

- introductory strategies
- closure strategies
- assigning work tasks
- feedback and corrective measures for assigned work tasks
- questioning techniques

- assessment procedures

LESSON CONTENT

- the content and the amount of content that are considered suitable by the supervising teacher for this class. The student teacher should demonstrate an understanding of the nature, level and quality of content in the prepared lessons to be taught throughout the supervised teaching days.

PLANNING

- the supervising teacher's work program
- the supervising teacher's timetable
- the format used by the supervising teacher to collate and present information in one curriculum area.

FORMAL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES

- recording of pupil progress – checklists and profiles
- maintenance of files of pupil's progress – report writing
- the format used by the supervising teacher to evaluate a unit of work

TASK 2. THE NON-CLASSROOM ASPECT OF TEACHING

The school's Principal/Student Teacher Coordinator is best placed to organise the following task.

This task does not specifically belong to the observation and preparation weeks. Sessions can be organised when convenient throughout the round.

The Principal is asked to provide some formally organised information sessions.

Our consulting school Principals suggest that beginning teachers will need an awareness of:

- the school and the Catholic Education Office Victoria/Government agencies
- school policy and school-based curriculum
- the 'religious factor' in Catholic parish schools
- Principals' expectations of first year graduate teachers
- professionalism
- the Schools' Handbook
- other matters considered relevant

Other staff members may be able to educate students formally and informally about:

- specialist staff and their roles
- subject and level coordination
- computer technology and programs within the school
- parental involvement
- Parent-teacher meetings
- styles of report writing
- any other matters relevant to classroom, school and community

SUPERVISED TEACHING WEEKS

PART B – Six week teaching component

This is the final practicum experience in the student teacher's course of preparation for beginning teaching. This phase provides the student teacher with an opportunity to take prolonged responsibility for the progress of a grade and to incorporate sensitivities and skills into developing a personal teaching style.

The student teacher should assume the major responsibility for planning and teaching during these weeks. The supervising teacher is asked to work with the student teacher taking on more of a mentoring role. The mentor role entails promoting the professional and personal development of the student teacher.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To assume independence in preparing and planning curriculum programs and sequenced units of work.
2. To refine classroom organisation, management and teaching practices.
3. To develop a deeper sense of professional responsibility and commitment.
4. To utilise self-evaluation techniques as a means of refining practice.
5. To utilise effective assessment and reporting strategies.
6. To prepare student teachers for successful induction into full time teaching.

To achieve these objectives, the student teacher is required to complete the following tasks:

- (a) teaching single/consecutive lessons
- (b) planning and teaching half day sessions
- (c) planning and teaching full day sessions
- (d) planning and teaching curriculum sequences/units of work
- (e) four weeks of full control (this may include team teaching with the supervising teacher or shared program organisation where the student teacher is the major contributor to the planning and implementation of the program.)

Please Note: NO SPECIFIC NUMBER OF TASKS FOR ITEMS (a), (b) AND (c) ABOVE HAVE BEEN SET. As this is the student teacher's final teaching round, each student teacher is expected to maximise every opportunity to gain as much experience as possible in the areas outlined.

Details of these tasks are outlined on the following pages.

Please adapt these requirements in accordance with the supervising teacher's organisation of curriculum programs and classroom activities.

Task 1 Prepare and write in teaching plan folder a number of single and/or consecutively taught lessons during the latter part of the first week of this supervised component.

The following conditions apply in relation to lesson preparation:

i. Subject or topic of each lesson to be determined following discussion between the supervising teacher and student teacher.

ii. Each lesson is to be set out in appropriate detail. Self-evaluation comments must be completed. (The student teacher is not obliged to use the University lesson plan format but sufficient detail must be provided to satisfy the supervising teacher's expectations. Modified lesson plan attached.).

iii. Because you will be immersed in school activities you will need to do your lesson preparation outside of school time.

iv. Prepared lesson/session outlines/details are to be handed to the supervising teacher prior to teaching.

Failure to comply with conditions iii & iv may result in withdrawal of permission to teach.

v. The supervising teacher is requested to write in the student teacher's teaching plan folder an evaluation of the lessons/sessions.

In the case of two lessons being taught consecutively the student teacher is expected to write the two lesson outlines or highlight, on a work program, the steps for the lesson transition.

Task 2 Using the supervising teacher's work program format, plan, organise and write in the teaching plan folder brief details of lessons and teach these during half day sessions.

The following features should be included in each daily plan and incorporated into the work program format:

- * Time, Grade, Subject, Topic
- * Instructional Objectives/Learning Outcomes
- * Resources
- * Activities
- * Assessment criteria

Self-evaluation comments MUST be recorded at the conclusion of each day.

The instructions set out above (items i, iii and v) apply to preparation of half-day sessions.

Task 3 With the assistance of the supervising teacher plan and teach three sequences/units of work. These sequences may be taught at any time throughout the supervised days of the teaching round. The following conditions apply:

i. The sequences may be chosen from any curriculum program.

ii. Sequences must incorporate five/six lessons or alternatively a minimum of three hours for Preparatory grade to a minimum of five hours for Years 5/6. If desired, additional lessons may be taught.

iii. The supervising teacher's unit format may be used or one modelled in curriculum areas taught throughout the student teacher's University course.

Note: Whatever unit format is followed, it should incorporate the following information: pupil's background to learning, objectives/learning outcomes, learning experiences/activities, assessment strategies and criteria, resources, time allocation, evaluation.

iv. Student teachers are required to demonstrate a variety of lesson strategies in the planned sequence for example, exposition, narration, application, revision and if necessary, remediation/extension for some pupils.

v. Student teachers should endeavour to arouse and sustain pupils' interest and application through a variety of motivational resources and strategies.

vi. Set out the sequence/unit plans in the student teacher's teaching plan folder.

vii. Self-evaluation comments must be recorded.

viii. The supervising teacher is requested to write in the student teacher's teaching plan folder an evaluation of the student teacher's planning, organisation and implementation of the sequences/units of work.

Task 4 In co-operation with supervising teachers and/or other teachers of the same year level, student teachers will plan collaboratively and team-teach a third sequence/unit. The sequence may be taught at any time throughout the supervised days of the teaching round. This task aims:

i. to provide an opportunity for student teachers to work in a collegial manner providing experience in collaborative planning.

ii. to provide student teachers with experiences similar to that of a team teaching classroom situation where teachers share planning and teaching, recognising and developing each other's areas of expertise.

Ideally, student teachers should be given time to co-teach with the supervising teacher so that actual collegial and collaborative work is realised.

The following conditions apply:

- i. Negotiate a topic with supervising teacher/teachers, where applicable, that is suitable.
- ii. The sequence incorporates five/six lessons or alternatively a minimum of three hours for Preparatory grade to a minimum of five hours for Years 5/6.
- iii. Using the supervising teacher's format, plan in a collaborative manner all learning outcomes and accompanying activities suitable for the various classes involved.

Note: If the supervising teacher's unit format is followed, it should incorporate the following information: pupil's background to learning, objectives/learning outcomes, learning experiences/activities, assessment strategies and criteria, resources, time allocation, evaluation.

iv. Student teachers are required to demonstrate a variety of lesson strategies in the planned sequence, for example, exposition, narration, application, revision and if necessary, remediation/extension for some pupils.

v. Student teachers should endeavour to arouse and sustain pupils' interest and application through a variety of motivational resources and strategies.

vi. The sequence/unit plan should be set out in each student teacher's teaching plan folder.

vii. Collaborative and reflective evaluations must be recorded.

viii. Supervising teachers are asked to contribute to (vii) by commenting on the student teacher's planning and implementation of the sequence/unit.

Supervising teachers are encouraged to join in all lessons and activities planned in order to further develop the concept of collegial interaction.

Task 5 With the assistance of the supervising teacher plan, prepare, teach and take responsibility for *four weeks* planning and teaching.

Each full day session is to be set out in the teaching plan folder using the supervising teacher's work program format.

The following features should be included in each daily plan and incorporated into the work program format:

- * Time, Grade, Subject, Topic
- * Instructional Objectives/Learning Outcomes
- * Resources
- * Activities
- * Assessment criteria

Self-evaluation comments **MUST** be recorded at the conclusion of each day.

The supervising teacher is requested to write an evaluation in the student teacher's teaching plan folder concerning the planning, organisation and implementation of each timetabled full-day program taught.

Task 6 This task is for student teachers enrolled in the Religious Education component of the course. *Some student teachers are not enrolled in this component of the course. Task 6, therefore, would not be applicable to these students.*

In association with the supervising teacher, it is expected that student teachers at this stage of teacher education would be capable of taking full responsibility for all the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Religious Education program of their assigned class.

Student teachers are required to develop, teach and evaluate at least one unit of work. Student teachers are expected, where possible, to lead a liturgy or prayer service and to familiarise themselves with the school's Religious Education resources.

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Before leaving the Campus all student teachers have been reminded of the following matters:

1. to take part in yard duty, lunch supervision, staffroom commitments, etc.
2. to maintain at all times conduct, which is responsible and professional
3. to establish a caring and conscientious teacher image for pupils to model
4. to dress professionally
5. to assist in the care of the classroom
6. to arrive no later than 8:30am each morning and to remain at least until 4:00 pm daily (some schools may require an earlier arrival time or later departure time)
7. to inform the Principal/Student Teacher Coordinator no later than 8.00 a.m. if the student teacher is unable to attend school on a particular day. Failure to do this is to be reported to the University without delay, as this may constitute a record of non-achievement for the round. (A Doctor's certificate should normally be provided.)
8. all absences during any phase of the Extended Practicum will need to be made up. Please negotiate such arrangements with the assigned school and notify the local campus PXP Office of the number of days to be made up. Student teachers will be required to arrange and make up time lost because of illness or misfortune and provide signed evidence from the school that the time lost has been made up.

Note: If the student teacher is not fulfilling these responsibilities satisfactorily, please discuss this with the student teacher and Principal/Student Teacher Coordinator. If there is further concern on the part of the supervising teacher or Principal/Student Teacher

Coordinator about a student teacher's classroom management, teaching performance, attitude or professional conduct, please notify the University as soon as possible.

It is important that each student teacher demonstrates and maintains a high standard of performance and commitment throughout the round.

LEGAL LIABILITY

While it is desirable for the student teacher to become fully involved in school activities, it should be noted that the student does not assume the legal responsibility of an employed fully qualified and registered teacher. *No student teacher can be left alone in a class.* The Principal and staff of the school are legally responsible for their pupils at all times.

SUPERVISION TASKS

SUPERVISING TEACHER

As the nature of this Round encourages the student teacher's induction to full-time teaching, the supervising teacher is asked to:

1. Provide information to enable advance planning of lessons/programs/units of work.
2. Check the student teacher's planning in his/her teaching plan folder prior to implementation.
3. Write comments in the teaching plan folder concerning the student teacher's planning, preparation, lesson implementation, achievement of lesson/unit objectives/outcomes, and the teacher as a facilitator of learning and classroom manager.
4. Discuss with the student teacher your evaluative comments recorded in (3) above.
5. Work in a collaborative mentor relationship with the student teacher during the supervised component of the Round.
6. **Identify any perceived problems and bring to the attention of the Principal/Student Teacher Coordinator prior to the 4 weeks of full control.**
7. Provide written documentation for discussion at the Progress Review.
8. Contact the Student Teacher Coordinator should there be any change to student teacher performance during the later stages of the Round.
9. Complete the appropriate sections of the Professional Experience Report Form.

STUDENT TEACHER COORDINATOR

1. Ensure that the student teacher is made familiar with the nature and organisation of the school, the school's rules and routines, expectations concerning the conduct and professional responsibilities of the student teacher whilst in the school.
2. In conjunction with the teachers, organise observation lessons to be conducted throughout the school.
3. Assist the supervising teacher with the organisation and recording of the Progress Report.

4. Facilitate the consultation process between all parties concerned with the Progress Report.
5. In conjunction with or on behalf of the Principal, observe the student teacher in a teaching situation and write an evaluation in the student teacher's teaching plan folder.
6. **Bring any perceived problems to the attention of the University PXP Office at the appropriate campus prior to the 4 weeks of full control.**
7. Contact the Professional Experience Office should there be any change to student teacher performance during the later stages of the Round.
8. Complete the appropriate section of the Professional Experience Report Form.

SUPERVISION

The Trescowthick School of Education recognises and acknowledges the expertise of teachers who supervise student teachers during their professional experience in schools. Changes to supervision have been made to highlight the value placed on the contribution of supervising teachers and, at the same time, to maintain the collegial relationship between supervising teachers and University staff.

University staff will not visit student teachers for this phase unless a request is made to do so. University staff will make telephone contact with schools to ascertain a student teacher's Round progress.

It should be remembered that at all times supervising teachers, Student Teacher Coordinators and student teachers may request a University supervisor to visit a school if any concerns or difficulties arise.

The supervising teacher, with assistance from the Student Teacher Coordinator, should organise and record a Progress Report and, after discussion with the student teacher, this report should be signed by the supervising teacher and the student teacher. These reports will identify the strengths and areas of focus for the remainder of the student's teaching round and will make recommendations for the student teacher's further teaching practice.

The Student Teacher Coordinator is asked to ensure that a Progress Report has taken place and that information concerning each student teacher is available for phone discussion.

Where a student teacher has been identified as "at risk" by the school, specialist supervision will be provided for him/her. If requested by the school, supervision may include lesson critiques by a University supervisor. The latter would normally be the case if the supervising teacher recommends a fail grade.

GRADING & EVALUATION

GRADING SCALE

PASS

The student teacher is demonstrating competent classroom teaching and management skills in accord with their phase of training. These include:

- (a) detailed, clearly expressed, prepared and presented lessons and units of work

- (b) organisation and implementation of a range of learning activities
- (c) diversity of teaching approaches
- (d) management skills demonstrating classroom teacher control, group/composite/multiage grade management.
- (e) ability to plan, organise and teach for a sustained period of time.

Self-evaluation comments are perceptive. The student teacher is aware of areas, which require further refinement to enhance his/her overall teaching performance and interpersonal skills. The student teacher is initiating alternative strategies as stated in his/her recommendations.

The student teacher displays an excellent attitude and relationship with pupils and staff. The student teacher demonstrates a caring, dedicated teacher model.

The objectives of the teaching round and relevant report form descriptors should be used in conjunction with (a), (b), (c) & (d) above.

FAIL

A Fail will be awarded to any student teacher who is not performing satisfactorily in terms of lesson/unit preparation, set teaching tasks, classroom management, professional responsibilities and who demonstrates an inability to facilitate teaching and learning over a sustained period of time.

There may prevail an attitude of poor motivation, a lack of commitment and inconsistent endeavour to upgrade his/her professional approach and to modify his/her general ineptitude. This student teacher may demonstrate problems in relating effectively with pupils as well as working co-operatively with staff. Also, the student teacher may demonstrate a lack of knowledge in content areas.

When a Fail is awarded, the student teacher will be required to attend a meeting conducted by a Review Committee to evaluate circumstances leading to the Fail grade. The student teacher will be required to repeat the teaching round at the next available Professional Experience time on the University calendar.

DETERMINING A GRADE REFLECTING A STUDENT TEACHER'S PERFORMANCE

The expectation from the perspective of the University is that school personnel recommend a grade for the student teacher's performance.

The final award of the grade is the responsibility of the University.

The student teacher is expected to maintain his/her level of competence until the round concludes. Any deterioration in the student teacher's classroom teaching/management, attitude or professional conduct may jeopardise the student teacher's PASS award. If there are qualitative changes in the student teacher's teaching performance and/or conduct, the award of PASS may be withdrawn and a FAIL rating substituted.

Student teachers should contact the Professional Experience Office to discuss any concerns regarding the teaching round. If University personnel are not aware of such problems during the teaching round, it may be too late at the end of the round to reach an amicable solution.

RETURN OF THE PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE REPORT FORM

As with assignments, students are responsible for the timely return of their completed Report Forms. All students have been requested to collect their Report Form from their supervising teacher or Student Teacher Coordinator on *his/her final afternoon at school* and return it to their respective University campus immediately.

Schools are requested to ensure that the Report Forms have been completed prior to the conclusion of the round and are ready for collection by the student on the final afternoon.

The University values the input of all parties involved in the supervision process. The quality of this involvement will determine to a large degree, the nature of the competence and professionalism generated in our student teachers.

Thank you for your co-operation.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE PERSONNEL

Professional Experience Administrative Officers

St. Patrick's Campus, Fitzroy - Liz McKay 9953 3251

Aquinas Campus, Ballarat - Gayle O'Loughlan 5336 5324

Assistant Head of School (Professional Experience) Dr. Peter Morris 5336 5381

Coordinator of Professional Experience Anne-Maree Dawson 9953 3266

The following modified lesson plan would be suitable for Task 1.

MODIFIED LESSON PLAN

Lesson topic/Focus: _____ *Date:*

Key Learning Area (KLA): _____ Grade(s)
Year Level(s):

Curriculum Standard Framework (CSF) _____ Duration of Lesson:

Strand: _____

Learning Outcome(s):

(Concepts, skills or attitudes, understandings)

Content of Lesson:

Processes/strategies to promote learning
(activities, questions, assigned work tasks)

Assessment Strategies & Criteria

(Methods employed to demonstrate the children's learning)

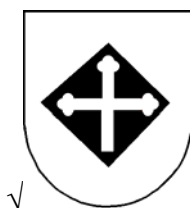
Lesson Evaluation:

Pupil achievement
Teacher effectiveness

Resources:

(List all teacher and pupil material used)
Provide copies of handouts/worksheets etc.

**APPENDIX 7: TEACHING AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT 1 UNIT
OUTLINE**



**AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
MELBOURNE CAMPUS**

B Ed 2 and B Ed (PG)

UNIT OUTLINE

UNIT CODE: EDTS109

TITLE OF UNIT: Teaching and Classroom Management 1

HOURS: 3

CREDIT POINTS: 10
Semester I, 2005

PREREQUISITE KNOWLEDGE: NIL

LECTURERS: Aquinas Campus Sr Mary Nuttall Tel: 5336 5398

St Patrick's Campus Anne-Maree Dawson Tel: (03) 9953 3266

UNIT DESCRIPTION:

This unit introduces the student to professional attitudes, understandings and skills. The focus is on the teacher as a decision -maker employing a reflective and self-analytical approach.

The unit seeks to introduce the student to the basic skills of teaching, classroom communication, effective management, the processes involved in planning learning segments and the fostering of an effective learning environment.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of this unit students will have:

- ♦ clarified their commitment to teaching, having observed and gained an understanding of the role of the teacher as a professional decision-maker;
- ♦ been prepared for exposure to modern primary schools and to have reflected critically on their nature, purpose, organisation and other significant features;

- ♦ observed children in formal and informal learning situations and built on these observations to begin the development of personal management and communication styles for fostering effective learning environments;
- ♦ planned and evaluated learning experiences for children;
- ♦ developed skills of observation;
- ♦ studied basic classroom instructional theory and teaching/learning strategies and to have begun to apply these to the classroom situation;
- ♦ participated in on-campus activities planned to prepare students for classroom teaching and management;
- ♦ reflected critically on personal learning styles, teaching/learning theory and practicum experiences;
- ♦ made specific links between this unit and Mathematics Education 1 (EDMA101) and English Education 1 (EDLA101).

CONTENT:

Topics will include

- ♦ The roles of a teacher;
- ♦ Purposes of primary schools and their relationship to the community;
- ♦ Methods of creating a positive working environment;
- ♦ Current issues in schooling;
- ♦ Basic teaching skills: questioning, explanation, time management, etc;
- ♦ Communication and management skills;
- ♦ Lesson planning;
- ♦ Resources for teaching;
- ♦ Observations in schools;
- ♦ Preparation for and follow up of Field Experience;
- ♦ Reflective thinking and Journal writing.

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES:

- ♦ Lectures
- ♦ Tutorials
- ♦ Visits to schools

ASSESSMENT

The assessment will relate directly to the achievement of the learning outcomes noted above.

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance at scheduled lectures and classes is expected. It is compulsory to attend classes so designated in Unit Outline (Academic regulation 4.1.3). Attendance criteria will deem to have been met by attendance and participation in 10/12 lectures and 10/12 tutorials. Rolls will be taken and students who miss class without explanation will not be considered for a pass. It is the students' responsibility to make sure that their attendance has been recorded in classes.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Assessment Tasks: All assessment tasks are outlined in the following pages. It is important to read the information provided for the assessments carefully and to follow all instructions.

Cover sheet: All assignments must have the signed cover sheet attached. The signature on this cover sheet is for the declaration *"I hold a photocopy of this assignment which I can produce if the original is lost or damaged. To the best of my knowledge and belief, no part of this assignment has been copied from any other student's work or from any other source"*

except where due acknowledgment is made in the text. No part of this assignment has been written for me by any other person except where collaboration has been authorised by the lecturer concerned.” Plagiarism and collusion will be dealt with strictly. (Academic regulation 4.4). The photocopy of the assignment may need to be produced in case of a lost assignment or a dispute.

Submission of assignments: Assignments must be submitted *directly to the lecturer or as stipulated by the lecturer.* Assignments submitted after the due or extended date will incur a 10% penalty of the maximum marks available for that assignment. Assignments received more than three calendar days after the due or extended date will not be allocated a mark. (Academic regulation 4.1.6).

Extension of time for submission of assignments: A student may apply to the Lecturer-in-Charge for an extension to the submission date of an assignment. Requests for extension are to be made on the appropriate form on or before the due date for submission. (Academic regulation 4.1.6).

Factors affecting performance: If a student believes that personal circumstances are likely to affect performance in an assessment task in a unit, the student is responsible for notifying the Lecturer-in-Charge and the Course Coordinator before the due date of submission of an assessment task. Alternatively, students may discuss their concerns with the Head of School prior to the submission date of an assessment task. (Academic regulation 4.1.5).

Collection of assignments: The assignments must be collected on the dates and at the times set. If not collected, and other arrangements have not been negotiated with the lecturer, they may be destroyed.

RESULTS

Final result information will not be available directly from the lecturer but will be sent out through student records. Results are provided on a graded scale as follows:

	<u>Code #</u>	<u>Percentage Range *</u>
High Distinction	HD	85-100
Distinction	DI	75- 84
Credit	CR	65- 74
Pass	PA	50- 64
Pass Conceded	PC	
Fail	NN	0- 49

- Normally in units that have thirty students or more it is expected that no more than 20% of the students will be awarded Distinction and High Distinction grades. Between 20% and 25% will be awarded Credit grades and usually no more than 15% will be awarded Pass Conceded or Fail grades. (Academic regulation 4.3.2). This means about half of the students in any unit will have a pass grade.

ASSESSMENT PRO FORMA

High Distinction (HD) represents excellence and depends upon the particular criteria being assessed. (HD) means that you demonstrate that you are aware of the intricacies of the designated task, that you have read widely and effectively, that you are able to work on a conceptual level both within the discipline and, where appropriate, between disciplines and that your writing is exceptionally clear and comprehensible.

Distinction (DI) represents above average. It means that you have shown that you have presented a very satisfactory response to the designated task and have addressed the stated criteria.

Credit (CR) represents satisfactory. This means that while your response to the task has been effective, you have not shown an awareness of the wider implications of your study, particularly in terms of the items listed under (HD).

Pass (PA) represents marginal understanding only. This means that there are serious gaps in your response to the designated task in terms of the items listed under (HD).

Fail (NN) represents unsatisfactory. This means that there are deep-seated problems with your response to the designated task.

ASSESSMENT TASKS:

TASK 1 *LEARNING JOURNAL* (40%) To be completed each week

The **learning journal**, preferably a loose-leaf binder should be brought to every session. The journal will be used for two purposes:

- a) to record all lecture notes, workshop notes, study tasks, notes on classroom observations etc. and
- b) to record your **weekly critical reflections** about aspects of Teaching and Classroom Management based on your responses to:
 - insights gained in lectures and tutorials;
 - class activities;
 - designated readings based generally on Cole, P. & Chan, L. (1994). *Teaching principles and practice*. (2nd. Ed.). Sydney: Prentice Hall;
 - observations in schools; and
 - links made to EDLA 101 and EDMA 101.

Weekly critical reflections may be handwritten, typed, illustrated or printed.

Assessment Criteria for Learning Journal

- quality of lecture notes, tutorial notes, study tasks, classroom observations etc.
- quality of weekly critical reflections:
 - insights gained in lectures and tutorials;
 - class activities;
 - designated readings and applications of readings;
 - observations in schools; and
 - links made to EDLA 101 and EDMA 101.
- overall presentation, Grammar, Spelling etc.

TASK 2 *LESSON PLAN* (20%) Due Date: Week 6

- ◆ Provide a sample lesson plan using the **University Lesson Plan format**.
- ◆ Base your lesson plan on a topic designated in class or on some aspect/s of the topic related to your **Sample Teaching Package**. (Refer to TASK 3).

- ◆ Develop learning objectives/outcomes according to a **CSF key learning area** and associated strand.

Assessment Criteria for Lesson Plan

- Understanding of the principles of lesson planning;
- Relevant examples supplied for all sections of the ACU lesson plan;
- Objectives/outcomes that demonstrate pupil's learning to be acquired;
- Activities appropriate to learning outcomes;
- Assessment strategies that reflect objectives/outcomes and activities.

TASK 3 *SAMPLE TEACHING PACKAGE: (40%) Due Date: Week 9*

Organisational Components

- Form a **collaborative team** of up to five students to develop a Sample Teaching Package.
- Ensure that each team member makes an **equal commitment** to the task
- Delegate **specific roles** and **responsibilities** to each member of the group.
- Set aside **regular times** for developing your Sample Teaching Package

Development of a Sample Teaching Package

- Choose a **topic**, for example, *Water* that will form the basis of your Sample Teaching Package which could be used in one or more Key Learning Areas for a duration of **three weeks** for a **single class** or a **composite class** of students.
- Develop a **display** within your topic that should create interest and motivate students' learning.
- Use a **variety of media**, for example, visual, aural, tactile and commercially produced, as well as hand made items.
- Include a **technology component**, for example, current CD Roms, Kits, Software, Power Point, educational games etc.
- Demonstrate some use of **cursive handwriting**, for example, flash cards, posters etc.
- Prepare an **electronic copy** describing the **main features** of your sample teaching package for storage on **e-reserve**. In addition to summary points you may use digital photos to provide some visual representation of your presentation. Electronic reserve enables all class members to have access to each group's Sample Teaching Package. Ensure that **inclusive language** is used throughout the package, except when the context requires gender specific language.
- Include::
 - a **lesson plan** for some aspect of the Sample Teaching Package;
 - a **cover sheet** that includes the names of all team members;
 - a **one-page summary** sheet prepared by each team member and that describes each team member's contribution to the Sample Teaching Package. The summary sheet should include:
 - a) learning outcomes that will be fostered;
 - b) ways in which your material/resources will motivate learning;
 - c) ways in which lessons may be developed;

d) your material/resources adaptability to differing grade levels.

Sample Teaching Package: Tutorial Presentation 15%

- Each team member will prepare and present to the tutorial group a brief summary of her/his individual contribution to the Sample Teaching Package. The summary should be based on the criteria a) to d) noted above.

Assessment Criteria for the Sample Teaching Package and Tutorial Presentation

- The Sample Teaching Package and Tutorial Presentation will be assessed according to the criteria noted below.

**TUTORIAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST
SAMPLE TEACHING PACKAGE**

- Developed by: (*Name of student/s*): _____
- Key Learning Area/s: _____
- Topic: _____
- Class/es or Level/s: _____

CHECKLIST FOR DETERMINING EFFECTIVENESS OF SAMPLE TEACHING PACKAGE
(1 = least effective; 5 = most effective)

• Clarity of learning objectives/outcomes	1	2	3	4	5
• Sequence of potential lesson development	1	2	3	4	5
• Clarity of directions for use of Package	1	2	3	4	5
• Visual impact	1	2	3	4	5
• Creativity	1	2	3	4	5
• Ease of use	1	2	3	4	5
• Motivation for learning	1	2	3	4	5
• Durability	1	2	3	4	5
• Adaptability to variety of individuals/grades	1	2	3	4	5
• Team's effort and input	1	2	3	4	5

GENERAL COMMENTS:

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RECOMMENDED TEXT

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Research Question 1. Purposes of the Extended Practicum		
Summary of findings	Recommendations	Implementation strategies
Disparity between supervising teachers and university staff regarding purposes of the extended practicum	Purposes of the extended practicum need to be clearly identified and information uniformly disseminated to supervising teachers, students and university staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ongoing reference group of key stakeholders established to clarify and routinely review aims of the extended practicum 2. Formal induction workshops provided by the university for supervising teachers to discuss aims and requirements of the extended practicum. 3. University documentation to clearly identify aims of the extended practicum 4. Documentation relating to the extended practicum to be distributed to all key stakeholders involved in the extended practicum
Research Question 2. Effectiveness of the Extended Practicum		
Summary of findings	Recommendations	Implementaion strategies
1. All stakeholders indicated that the extended practicum adequately assisted students in developing teaching competencies but some problems were identified	That problems be identified and addressed	That the practicum at ACU (including the extended practicum) be comprehensively reviewed
2. Academic content does not prepare students adequately for the extended practicum	Academic content should provide up-to-date, relevant professional knowledge to prepare students for the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching	Regular reviews between representatives from key stakeholder groups of the academic component and assessment of the practicum

3. Preparation of Guidelines Booklet lacks clarity and is thus difficult to understand and use	University documentation relating to the conduct of the extended practicum by the university must be clear, unambiguous and user friendly	That a reference committee of key stake holders in the practicum review and revise the practicum guideline booklet
4. Some supervising teachers are inadequately prepared to supervise students	Supervising teachers need to be familiar with their roles and responsibilities prior to undertaking the supervision of students for the extended practicum.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. University must provide professional development sessions for supervising teachers 2. Supervising teachers must attend these sessions prior to supervising students 3. School coordinators need to collaborate as necessary with the university professional experience staff when necessary
5. Overall supervising teachers were satisfactory in supervising students. However, in some instances supervising teachers were not experienced, and committed. to this task	<p>Selection strategies introduced to guide selection of supervising teachers</p> <p>Supervising teachers should be reviewed regularly</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A committee representative of key stakeholders convened to develop guidelines for selection and review of supervising teachers 2. University induction programs presented for potential supervising teachers. 3. Mentoring system to be established by schools 4. Student evaluation of extended practicum following final placement
6. Lack of support for students during the practicum. Students no longer visited by university staff. Reduced feedback and lack of assistance for students in completing tasks.	<p>Students should have access to university staff during the practicum – via telephone, email</p> <p>A student list-serve provided by the university could provide students with peer support during the practicum</p> <p>Students who are at risk or who have failed the extended practicum should be provided a remediation programs immediately following the practicum</p>	A committee convened to investigate and develop a range of resources to improve the communication between the university and students during the practicum
7. Poor profile of ACU Professional Experience	Profile of ACU Professional Experience Coordinator needs to be improved	Roles and responsibilities of the Professional Experience Coordinator clearly defined

Coordinator		Effective ways of communicating with students, supervising teachers and staff be established and disseminated
8. Partnerships between stakeholders is in decline	Partnerships between the key stakeholders (university and schools) need to be improved and strengthened	Introduce regular consultation between key stakeholders in the practicum Develop partnership agreements to clarify roles, responsibilities and expectations of those involved in the practicum Establish ways to evaluate the practicum
Research Question 3. Integrating theory with practice		
Summary of findings	Recommendations	Implementation strategies
Some students have difficulties linking theory to practice	Linking theory to practice requires increased focus to bridge the gap between what is taught at the university and what is taught in the classroom	Develop strategies to help students to make links between theory and practice. This may include assessment, reflection and feedback.
Disparity between theory taught at university and teaching practice	Ensure that schools know what is taught at university The university should be aware of the programs being used in schools and current issues impacting on schools	Provide schools with up-to date curriculum content Every university lecturer should spend (professional development) time in schools to maintain teaching contact and professional credibility

Table 6:4 illustrates the findings in relation to the fourth research aim

Table 6:4 Implications for the extended practicum

Stakeholders	Implications
Supervising teachers	Professional development for all stakeholders Student to be introduced to a variety of teaching and learning skills in early stages of the extended practicum
University staff	Need for university staff to clearly understand aims and responsibilities of the extended practicum Awareness of the number of tasks required of students
Student teachers	Review of process in allocating students to schools Block teaching effective way of consolidating teaching practice Timing of the extended practicum most critical Observation to commence in earlier years of practicum Better to use 2 weeks observation time at the university than in schools (planning and preparation)
General	Timing and length of extended practicum needs reviewing to provide optimum teaching opportunities for students Availability of experienced and committed supervising teachers to supervise students. Preparation time for students is critical

Recommendations	<p>The extended practicum needs to be reviewed</p> <p>Purposes and guidelines of extended practicum need to be clearly identified and understood by key stakeholders</p> <p>Academic content for students at university needs to be reviewed</p> <p>Improved profile of Professional Experience Department and in Provision of on-going professional development for supervising teachers provided by university (training, support and resources)</p> <p>Experienced, qualified and committed supervising teachers to supervise students</p> <p>Higher profile of Professional Experience Coordinator at ACU</p> <p>Review and strengthening of partnerships between the university and schools</p> <p>Linking of theory with practice at ACU and in schools.</p>
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