Contents

1. Introduction 4
2. International trends 5
3. In-school placement models 6
4. School Centres for Teaching Excellence 8
1. Introduction

Teacher quality has a significant influence upon student engagement and achievement in schooling. In Victoria, as elsewhere in Australia and internationally, this is acknowledged in efforts to raise teaching standards, commonly through strategies to improve the quality of teacher applicants and pre-service teacher education. In regard to pre-service education, there is increasing recognition of the contribution of school practicum experience in providing student teachers with practical classroom skills and preparing them for a career in teaching.

Victoria’s 2005 Parliamentary Inquiry into the Suitability of Pre-Service Teacher Training concluded that for pre-service teachers to fully appreciate the demands and dimensions of teaching, they need to be immersed in schools and other learning environments throughout their studies. This view has been reflected by teachers in early service, who consider schools to be significantly more effective than universities in teaching about teaching (Australian Secondary Principals’ Associations Survey, 2007). The Inquiry Committee observed that universities could improve delivery of teacher education by developing partnerships with schools and recommended that teacher education courses pay greater attention to:

- heightening knowledge of the practical dimensions of teaching among pre-service and new teachers;
- improving the integration of practical experience into the structure and substance of teacher education courses; and
- modelling of effective teaching practices during teacher education.

School-based research projects and increased involvement of current practitioners in the delivery of teacher education were identified as key ways of achieving these objectives.

In late 2008 the Council of Australian Governments agreed to introduce the Smarter Schools – Quality Teaching National Partnership to help attract and retain quality teachers and leaders in schools. Among the priorities for reform is to improve the quality of teacher training in partnership with universities. Commonwealth funding is available for the establishment of pilot centres in which universities and schools will establish leading practice in pre-service education and continuing professional learning.

The Victorian Government is seeking to foster closer engagement with universities to strengthen pre-service teacher education. Efforts to date have been directed towards addressing areas of teacher shortage and increasing the quantity and quality of practicum placements for student teachers. In a first step towards generating university-school partnerships, in 2009 the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development initiated a pilot program with the University of Melbourne to develop a Masters level pre-service teacher education program involving a partnership with approximately 25 schools. Following positive feedback from the University of Melbourne and participating schools on the effectiveness of the practicum model, the Department is seeking to further extend opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage in practice-based learning as part of their training.

This paper highlights international and domestic trends towards more extensive in-school placements for pre-service training, including models for university-school partnerships. Within this context, the rationale and aims of the Victorian School Centres for Teaching Excellence (SCTE) initiative are presented. The basis of the SCTE model – university-school partnerships that provide extensive in-school teaching experience closely integrated into teacher education programs – is outlined to inform consideration of specific university-school cluster partnership models.
2. International trends

Internationally, there is evidence of a shift towards closer engagement between university teacher education faculties and schools in pre-service training. Finland has an established tradition in this regard, with every teacher education university being closely linked to a school. These schools provide student teachers with classroom teaching practice under the guidance and supervision of experienced teacher trainers. The schools themselves benefit from exposure to the latest academic research and innovation.

More formalised and extended arrangements for pre-service teacher immersion in schools are a feature of recent teacher education reforms in the United States and the United Kingdom.

The US Federal Secretary of Education asserted that ‘America’s university-based teacher preparation programs need revolutionary change – not evolutionary tinkering’, and has subsequently lead a national reform to restructure teaching as a practice-based profession similar to medicine or nursing. Student teachers will have a more closely-monitored induction period, followed up with ongoing professional development. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education is investigating ‘scalable ways to improve in-the-classroom training and strengthen relationships between school districts and the colleges and universities that prepare their teachers’. Among the identified benefits of a residency model for student teachers are that they:

- become part of a school community;
- develop an ongoing professional relationship with an experienced mentor teacher;
- enjoy the collegial support of working with their peers in a learning community;
- experience the daily life of a teacher;
- have an impact in the classroom throughout the course;
- know and understand the students in the diverse school community;
- explore and experience issues related to the engagement of young people;
- learn to engage students and manage behaviour in real classrooms;
- take considered and well monitored risks when learning; and
- undertake academic work grounded in the school experience.

In the United Kingdom over the past decade teachers have been more extensively trained in school environments through school-centred programmes, a graduate teacher programme or Training Schools. Training Schools lead a cluster of other schools in training teachers and are specifically designed to develop and disseminate good practice in initial teacher training, to train mentors and to generate research on teaching and learning. More recently, a Teaching School model based on teaching hospitals has been introduced in London and Greater Manchester. Teaching Schools are selected from high performing schools whose head teachers have a track record in supporting other schools.

In 2010, the United Kingdom Schools White Paper The Importance of Teaching announced reforms to initial teacher training to increase the proportion of time trainees spend in the classroom. The UK Government plans to develop a national network of Teaching Schools based on the model of teaching hospitals, which will lead the training and professional development of teachers and head teachers. This approach effectively combines the Training School and Teaching School models. The best higher education providers of initial teacher training have also been invited to open University Training Schools.
3. In-school placement models

United States
In the United States there are several examples of successful student teacher placement models. Urban Teacher Residency United runs teacher residency programs in several States involving a year long in-school component with the support of school mentors. Trainees’ teaching responsibilities are increased as the year progresses, reaching 50 per cent of a full classroom teaching load. An evaluation of the Boston Teacher Residency program found evidence that urban teacher residencies were attracting a new pool of talented and diverse recruits, effectively preparing them to be successful in urban classrooms and retaining them in high-needs schools.

Stanford University’s Teacher Education Program has a strong emphasis on connecting the work of researchers and practitioners in schools. Stanford’s School of Education places pre-service trainee teachers in semester-long classroom teaching situations under the guidance of expert teachers, with both trainees and guiding teachers being supported by a university supervisor. A clinical teaching practicum consists of an average of 16 hours a week at the school site and a weekly seminar at Stanford. Candidates’ teaching responsibilities gradually increase during the year. An evaluation of the program indicated that its graduates achieved higher achievement levels for their students than those from other teacher education program groups.

The Teachers for a New Era (TNE) initiative, funded by the Carnegie Foundation, considers education to be ‘an academically taught clinical practice profession’. Programs funded under this initiative involve close cooperation between higher education providers and practising schools. Master teachers employed by teacher education providers act as a clinical faculty to support the development of clinically based teaching practice in schools. This model has informed the design of the University of Melbourne’s Master of Teaching program.

United Kingdom
Two prominent pre-service education programs in the United Kingdom – the Employment-based Initial Teacher Training program and the School-centred Initial Teacher Training program (SCITT) – both have a significant residency component. The Cornwall SCITT program, for example, involves a consortium of 16 local secondary schools, one special school, and a tertiary college that offers a one-year, full-time teacher training course. Student teachers receive supervised and planned practical classroom experience in at least two secondary schools, which is supported by their academic studies. An experienced subject teacher is assigned as a mentor, providing guidance and opportunities for the student teacher to plan, manage, deliver and assess aspects of their teaching. Student teachers are required to complete written assignments, research projects and a seminar presentation applying the theory of teaching to practical experience in the classroom.

Australia
Universities in Australia are similarly exploring ways to develop more extensive practicum placements for pre-service teachers. Teacher residency models have been recently established by Victoria University, the University of Melbourne and Edith Cowan University.

At Victoria University, over 20 third-year pre-service teachers are placed in a school for two days per week throughout the course of a semester. The student teachers participate in action teams to develop their knowledge and understanding of all aspects of teaching and learning. In 2009, five projects were undertaken in school under the guidance of a member of staff: VCE strategies for improvement; Year 9 City Experience; Junior School pedagogy; whole-school data collection and analysis; a Year 10 environmental and sustainability investigation; and the development and
implementation of an inquiry based curriculum. An evaluation of this program reported that the site-based context of the secondary school partnership provided the opportunity for pre-service teachers to better understand students and how schools and teachers work to respond to students’ needs.

In 2009 the University of Melbourne introduced a clinical teaching model involving partnership schools for its Master of Teaching program. The partnership involves approximately 25 schools, in which experienced teachers provide student teachers with mentoring support and the university provides clinical specialists – an approach similar to the clinical training of doctors in teaching hospitals. Student teachers assume increasing responsibility and independence in their teaching during their placements. This in-school experience is then contextualised and supported through a university pre-service program that covers: in-depth study of theory; research and practice in learning; pedagogy; and professionalism and ethics of teaching. A leading teacher is appointed as a part-time Teaching Fellow, providing support for the clinical training activities of the student teachers and offering professional support to supervising teachers. Evaluations of the Master of Teaching indicate that teacher candidates have created strong links between theory and practice in teaching and have been able to use data to support teaching practice and interventions in student learning.

In 2010, Edith Cowan University commenced a pilot teacher residency program which is similarly based on a medical training model, pairing university coursework with extended periods of school placement (or ‘clinical’ experience). This approach is consistent with the Western Australian Government’s aim to develop ‘training schools’ with partnerships between schools and universities. The Graduate Diploma of Education Residency Mode immerses student teachers in schools throughout the year alongside experienced teachers, including a school-based mentor. This enables trainees to learn in context, put theory into practice and develop a richer understanding of the role of a teacher. Much of the course content is delivered at school sites, with the remainder delivered on the university campus in either summer/winter school or online. Up to 10 Training Schools are initially expected to participate in the pilot, extending to 20 Training Schools in 2011.

Participating schools and teachers work alongside university staff to determine what aspiring teachers need to know and experience. Up to 12 pre-service teachers are placed in each school and meet regularly with their peers in academic tutorials. A Site Director coordinates mentors and residents and is involved in school cluster meetings. Both Site Directors and mentors receive professional development from university staff to prepare them for their roles and can gain credit towards post-graduate qualifications at Edith Cowan University.
4. School Centres for Teaching Excellence

The residency-based approaches outlined above not only contribute towards improving the quality of teacher candidates and teacher education programs; they also promote the ongoing adoption of leading practice in schools. Broadly, these objectives are advanced through:

1. A structured and supportive practicum setting in which student teachers can familiarise themselves with the practical requirements of teaching and apply leading teaching practice in a receptive school environment.

2. Integration of student teachers’ practicum experiences into university pre-service courses to more closely link teaching and learning theory with practice.

3. Research partnerships involving university academics and schools that inform the development and dissemination of teaching best practice.

The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is seeking to build stronger partnerships between university teacher education providers and schools through the establishment of up to six School Centres for Teaching Excellence (SCTE). These Centres will contribute to system-wide improvement in pre-service teacher education and in-service education.

In the SCTEs, university teacher education providers will work with participating schools to develop structured and supportive practicum arrangements for pre-service teachers. The SCTE clusters will operate in a way akin to teaching hospital environments, with student teachers learning as they contribute to the instruction of primary or secondary students, with the guidance of experienced teachers passing on their skills as practitioners. There is expected to be a strong emphasis on data-driven, diagnostic and interventionist practices.

Each SCTE cluster will engage in research contributing towards the generation and dissemination of best practice. They will form communities of practice for pre-service education and continuing professional learning – within and across SCTE clusters, and ultimately, across the wider education sector.

Participating schools would be expected to provide placements for pre-service teachers and support them in taking on specific roles and responsibilities. The schools would also provide coordinating/mentoring teachers, who themselves will receive training. It is anticipated that SCTE teachers will become involved in joint school-university research activities. Participating schools would need to provide their coordinating/mentor teachers and pre-service teachers with time release to meet with university staff, reflect on practice and plan activities. The schools will act as demonstration sites for other schools and contribute to publications and professional learning activities arising from the outcomes of the SCTE initiative.

Participating universities would be expected to structure their programs to enable extensive practicum placements for teams of pre-service teachers in SCTE participating schools. The design of teacher education programs would integrate educational theory and research with practicum experience. Universities would allocate staff resources to support the SCTE cluster and provide accredited training for mentor teachers. It is expected that participating schools would be actively engaged in university research and that there be opportunities for SCTE teachers to undertake Master of Education/Teaching programs and to assist with the delivery of the pre-service teacher education program.

To date, several Victorian universities have expressed interest in the SCTE initiative. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is seeking the views of universities, schools and other education stakeholders in refining the design of SCTE clusters in ways that best function to strengthen the quality of our teacher candidates and drive improvement in teaching practice across the State.
• differentiating instruction, proficient in using assessment to monitor learning and provide feedback, persistent searchers for data to guide and adjust practice, and exhibitors of the skills of clinical educators;

• all candidates should have intensive embedded clinical school experiences that are structured, staffed, and financed to support candidate learning and student achievement;

• state-of-the-art technologies should be employed by preparation programs to promote enhanced productivity, greater efficiencies, and collaboration through learning communities; and

• strategic partnerships, between preparation programs, school districts, teacher unions and state policy makers, are imperative for powerful clinical preparation.

In the United Kingdom, Murray (2004) compared the practices of teacher educators with those of nurse educators, social work educators and medical educators to explore how a teaching hospitals model might translate to pre-service education in teaching schools. The analysis emphasised the importance of safeguarding time for induction of new teachers in teaching schools and cautioned against assumptions that teaching schools could offer integrated and effective models of work to teacher educators. The author advised that the roles and functions of professional educators be considered carefully, allowing for a balance of first and second order teaching and engagement in scholarship.

Ure (2009) observes in relation to the clinically based extended practicum approaches that at present ‘little research evidence has emerged about the influence of this model on learning outcomes for pre-service teachers’.

Evaluations of particular in-school (‘residency’) practicum models in the United States indicate successful outcomes for student teachers, schools and students. Levine (2006) identified the Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP) as an exemplary model based on its:

• coherent, integrated, comprehensive and up-to-date curriculum that includes a sustained level of field experience;

• strong connection between theory and real classroom situations;

• high graduation standards;

• commitment to the program and students from faculty and administrators; and

• recognition from important external publics, including schools that hire its graduates and experts who assess them.

More recently, Newton (2010) conducted a longitudinal study to examine the relationships between teacher education, teaching practices and student learning. From a sample of around 250 secondary teachers and 3500 of their students, Newton measured the average difference between actual scores and predicted scores for all students assigned to each teacher from 2005 to 2007. Noting the moderate sample size, the study revealed that STEP graduates produced higher value-added achievement gains for their students than those of the other teacher education program groups and teachers from intern/alternative programs.

A review of the Boston Teacher Residency (BTR) program undertaken by Berry et al. (2008) reported its success in ‘attracting a new pool of talented and diverse recruits, preparing them to be successful in urban classrooms, and keeping them in high-needs schools and subjects’. Principals rated 88 per cent of BTR graduates as being ‘significantly more effective’ in comparison to other first-year teachers, and 94 per cent of principals indicated their desire to hire more BTR graduates. Between 90 and 95 per cent of graduates were still in teaching after three years. Mentors who worked with Residents were found to have learnt new instructional skills and gained renewed enthusiasm and motivation, which has contributed to the retention of some teachers who might have otherwise left the classroom or district. The leadership skills developed by mentors were seen as providing ‘a potential pipeline to leadership positions’.