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Preface

In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on teacher quality as a key ingredient of any strategy for school improvement. Within this emphasis there has been a focus on the quality of pre-service teacher training. At a national level priority has been given to improving teacher quality in a nationally agreed partnership. An element of this agreement refers explicitly to improving the quality of teacher training in partnership with universities.

In order to further improve the quality of teacher graduates, in 2010, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development undertook a review of literature on models of in-school pre-service teacher placement to inform the development of the School Centres for Teaching Excellence (SCTE) initiative. This paper presents a summary of research findings from the literature review.
1. **Practicum component of pre-service education**

Research on pre-service education approaches across several countries emphasises that in-school practicum placements for student teachers are a vital aspect of teacher training and need to be closely integrated into teacher education programs. The deficiencies of teacher training models that separate classroom experience from teacher education programs have been well highlighted. Barber and Mourshed (2007) observed in the United States that many teacher education programs had little impact on teacher effectiveness because ‘the connection between what the trainee teachers do during their training, and what they are expected to be able do once they arrive in the classroom, is not strong enough’.

Grossman and McDonald (2008) lament that ‘university-based teacher educators leave the development of pedagogical skill in the interactive aspects of teaching almost entirely to field experiences, the component of professional education over which we have the least control’. As recently as last year, a US National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education report asserted that ‘teacher education must shift away from a norm which emphasises academic preparation and course work loosely linked to school-based experiences’.

There are many advocates for reform to strengthen classroom-based experience for student teachers. Barber and Mourshed (2007) argue that all of the better school systems in the United States ‘had integrated practicum into their teacher training programs’. Grossman and McDonald (2008) assert that ‘research in teacher education needs to return to sustained inquiry about the clinical aspects of practice and how best to develop skilled practice’. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) contend that ‘opportunities to connect practice to expert knowledge must be built into learning experiences for teachers’.

In the United Kingdom, Geen and Harris (2002) have similarly emphasised the merit of site-based integration of theory and practice into pre-service teacher training. Collette (2007) observed that a greater emphasis on experiential learning was a contributing factor towards more school-based education. She witnesses the increased school-based component of initial teacher education, reflecting ‘a fundamental shift from teachers supervising students in the application of learning gained from initial teacher education courses to the teachers educating students based on their skills as practitioners’.

Darling-Hammond (2006) identified three critical components of effective teacher education programs:

1. tight coherence and integration among courses and between course work and clinical work in schools;
2. extensive and intensely supervised clinical work integrated with course work using pedagogies linking theory and practice; and
3. closer, proactive relationships with schools that serve diverse learners effectively and develop and model good teaching.

A 2009 Australian Learning and Teaching Council report *Practicum Partnerships: Exploring Models of Practicum Organisation in Teacher Education for a Standards-Based Profession* (Ure, 2009) derived the following conclusions from the body of research on pre-service training models:

- the amount of time (number of days or weeks of placement), and the timing of placements impacts on pre-service teachers’ confidence and ability to relate theory to practice;
- pre-service teachers who have had more time to teach in a range of settings have a stronger frame with which to interpret concepts about teaching and learning;
Clinical models of pre-service training

Ure (2009) observed that of the four models of teacher professional learning – partnership and collaborative learning; reflective learning; clinically applied; and pedagogical content knowledge focused – the clinical–practice model of teaching ‘heralds a significant reform for the practicum and academic components of teacher education’.

The United States National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2010) recommended ‘turning teacher training ‘upside down’ by implementing a long-term, clinically based approach, similar to the model used in doctor education’. It recognised that for teachers to be effective there needed to be a ‘move to programs that are fully grounded in clinical practice and interwoven with academic content and professional courses’.

The NCATE considers that a clinically based approach to teacher education will ‘give aspiring teachers the opportunity to integrate theory with practice, to develop and test classroom management and pedagogical skills, to hone their use of evidence in making professional decisions about practice, and to understand and integrate the standards of their professional community’. The model would provide a combination of school embedded practice and laboratory-type experiences.

The Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning (Cibulka and Zimpher, 2010), which advised the NCATE, asserted that ‘teacher education programs must work in close partnership with school districts to redesign teacher preparation to better serve prospective teachers and the students they teach’. Design principles outlined for clinically based preparation included that:

- P–12 student learning must serve as the focal point for the design and implementation of clinically based teacher preparation, and for the assessment of newly minted teachers and the programs that have prepared them;
- clinical preparation is integrated throughout every facet of teacher education in a dynamic way;
- candidates must practice in a collaborative culture, and be provided with rigorous peer review of their practice and their impact on student learning;
- clinical educators and coaches must be effective practitioners, skilled in 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 90–95 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’.

Clinical models of pre-service training
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