

Chapter 4

Clinical Praxis Exams: Linking Academic Study with Professional Practice Knowledge

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4.1 Introduction

One of the more salient challenges facing teacher educators and curriculum leaders in schools is how to assist beginning teachers to link their academic studies with professional practice knowledge. Traditionally, the role of universities and colleges in teacher education has been to provide both theoretical and practical understandings of curriculum and pedagogy, as well as to administer the placement and mentoring of pre-service teachers in schools; however, whilst the remit may have been to provide both theoretical and practical understandings, the overall emphasis was largely on the provision of theoretical and decontextualised, laboratory-based perspectives (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005). This emphasis was balanced by a belief that teaching of much of the requisite professional practice knowledge would be taken up by teachers in schools. From a university perspective, practice

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was generally seen as the ‘poor cousin’ of theory and the emphasis on extant practice by classroom teachers was frequently cited as a key explanation for why the lofty ideas put forth in the academy did not work in schools.

Over the years, this model of teacher education has been criticised for creating an unfavourable divide between academic studies and professional practice knowledge, tertiary institutions and schools. Each generation of teacher educators has attempted the exigent task of linking theory to practice in the learning experiences of pre-service teachers (teacher candidates). Solutions from within the university frequently emphasise links between theory and practice through university-based tasks requiring teacher candidates to trial an idea in the classroom and report back in university classes. This approach can be seen as intrusive by classroom teachers or as decontextualised by teacher candidates and students in schools. On occasions, teacher candidates have reported complaints from schools about this approach, as well as feeling the need to ‘take sides’ in a perceived debate between academic studies and professional practice knowledge; however, the relationship between the two is more nuanced, complex, and multi-dimensional than a simple theory-practice divide might suggest. While the impact of university programmes on teachers has proved difficult to measure, many commentators have questioned the efficacy of the dominant models of teacher education (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005).

4.2 The Challenge of Linking Theory to Practice

The failure to adequately merge academic studies and professional practice knowledge in the learning experience of teacher candidates has characterised teacher education programmes for longer than we like to think. Malcolm Vick has shown that, for more than a century, the coordination of responsibilities for educators between the schools and teaching colleges has been fraught with problems, including teacher education staff not being sufficiently experienced in contemporary school teaching, the imposition of conflicting requirements on teacher candidates and the timing of programme elements to work against the reflective linking of theory and practice (Vick 2006). The last of these conundrums has usually been ascribed to teacher mistrust of university methods, which discourages teacher candidates from attempting to translate theoretical perspectives and other elements of their academic studies into classroom practice, and the expectation of the universities that their teacher candidates will transform their new schools, rather than reproduce prevailing practices (Vick 2006, p. 191).

The inability of generations of teacher educators to devise a satisfactory programme linking knowledge *about* teaching and learning, to knowledge *of* teaching and learning (Loughran 2010) led some commentators to question the theoretical competence of the teacher educators themselves (Zeichner et al. 2015). On the other hand, more sanguine researchers continue to claim that the fundamental feature of any education programme design is the need for a unified programme where teacher candidates are taught a clear conception of what is needed in order to be a

successful practitioner (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005). The unification of a programme necessitates the development of shared understanding of what excellent teaching and learning look like, the development of a shared metalanguage, and a genuine integration of these across the programme. Importantly the professional practice placement also requires re-envisioning as a ‘hybrid [space] where academic, practitioner and community-based knowledge come together in new ways to support the development of innovative and hybrid solutions to the problem of preparing teachers’ (Zeichner et al. 2015, p. 124).

Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) likewise describe the need for teachers to access ‘shared understandings and practices’. They argued for the need of education to learn from other professions: as is the case for law and medicine, that have ‘evolved from a consensus about what professionals need to know and be able to do if they are to profit from profession-wide knowledge and if they are to have the diagnostic and strategic judgment to address the needs of those whom they serve’ (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005, p. 9). Teacher education, then, becomes a matter of encouraging the concrete application of broad principles, followed by reflection on the experience (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005).

The approach was broadly endorsed in the Australian Learning and Teaching Council’s (ALTC) report (2009) exploring different professional placement models for teacher education courses. The ALTC report concluded that teacher candidate placements should be concurrent with the academic and theoretical component of the programme (ALTC 2009, p. 14). It also identified the need for further evidence-based research into the coherence and quality of academic study and professional practice links to determine how programme design promotes teaching practice, acknowledging that there remains a lack of understanding about how teacher candidates draw on their academic studies or how their placement experiences contribute to their professional development (ALTC 2009, p. 25). This challenge of negotiating the theory/practice nexus, and need for teacher education programmes to more meaningfully engage with the sites of practice have led to what Mattsson et al. (2011) have described as the ‘Practicum turn’ in teacher education. This ‘Practicum turn’ is a recognition that theorised ‘practicum knowledge’, which takes a variety of forms, is the key to developing understandings of pre-service teachers. Burn and Mutton (2013) show in their recent survey of clinical models of pre-service teacher education, that clinical programmes, which are invested in strong partnerships between schools and university, are particular examples of this practicum turn.

In the following section, we will turn our attention to the ways in which an assessment and curriculum innovation, the Clinical Praxis Exam (CPE), sought to leverage the close partnerships between schools and the university facilitated by a clinical model, in order to facilitate and mobilise the meaningful interplay between theory and practice, and ground theoretical understandings in school experience. The CPE is described and the theoretical basis for the innovation is outlined. Particular attention is paid to the way in which the content of each CPE is drawn from the classroom practice of individual teacher candidates and their negotiations with students, mentor teachers, and school-based university staff. The chapter then

outlines responses from teacher candidates, mentor teachers, teaching fellows (see below) and university teachers who participated in two qualitative research projects examining the efficacy and impact of the CPE. Findings are then summarised and the next steps in the ongoing refinement of the CPE are outlined.

4.3 The Innovation of a Promising Assessment Approach —The Clinical Praxis Examination

In 2008, MGSE introduced the pre-service Master of Teaching degree. Discussions about the design of the degree considered contemporary debates about the relationship between academic studies and professional practice experiences. The final design drew inspiration from research into teacher education programmes across the English-speaking world to construct an academically taught, clinical practice programme in which keen skills of observation, the gathering and analysis of evidence, and the capacity to make reasoned judgements and take action, were developed. In the first instance, the design drew heavily on the Stanford Teacher Education Programme (STEP) from Stanford University in California, as well as programmes implemented at the University of Virginia and Bank Street Teachers' College, New York, each of which emphasised a strong relationship among knowledge about teaching and learning, and knowledge of teaching and learning, albeit in their own ways. Each of these programmes also emphasised the importance of discipline-specific knowledge experts' input into programming. Accordingly, MGSE academics redesigned subjects to take account of the increased time in schools and to assist teacher candidates to make meaningful links between their academic studies and professional practice through a range of practice-based tasks within each subject.

New placement structures such as the clustering of schools into partnership networks and the introduction of teaching fellows (school-based expert teachers able to provide strong contextual knowledge and support for both teacher candidates and mentor teachers) and clinical specialists (university-based clinical experts involved in the teaching of academic subjects who work with teaching fellows to provide a school-based seminar programme) were designed to support the bringing together of academic studies and professional practice knowledge (McLean Davies et al. 2013). While the additional time in schools and the revised structures produced some significant gains, particularly in the overall relationship between schools and the university, some teacher candidates found the links between academic subjects and practicum experience difficult to make. In response, a Clinical Praxis Exam (CPE) was designed with the explicit intention of integrating learning from amongst the academic subjects with professional practice knowledge developed during placements (Fig. 4.1). The intention was also to provide a form of assessment and feedback conducive to learning in a clinical model.

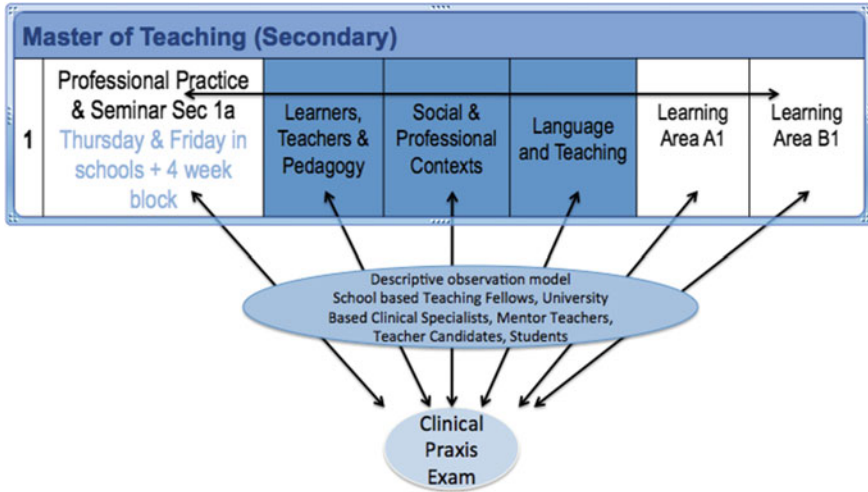


Fig. 4.1 This figure shows the elements and participants within the first semester of study in the Master of Teaching (Secondary), highlighting their relationship to each other and to the Clinical Praxis Exam

4.3.1 Why Clinical Praxis?

In bringing together the terms ‘clinical’ and ‘praxis’ the academic team responsible for its design and implementation, aimed to denote a set of practices that draw upon productive elements from both ‘clinical’ and ‘praxis’ approaches to teacher education. While each approach aims to link theory and practice, academic studies and professional practice knowledge in productive ways, they each do so with different emphases, both of which the team felt were important. The use of ‘clinical’ was intended to draw attention to the importance of learning in situ from experienced practitioners and from interactions with students as well as the need to develop a repertoire of strong technical, practical and reasoning skills from which to draw when making judgments (Kriewaldt and Turnidge 2013) about student progress and how best to intervene to meet individual learning needs. The use of ‘praxis’ was intended to draw attention to the impossibility of our interventions and actions being neutral or inherently benign, and to the reality that actions have both short and long-term ontological, epistemological, political, cultural and material consequences for students, families, communities, teachers, schools and the broader world. Therefore, any interventions should be undertaken with care and consideration of broader consequences including those that may not be immediately apparent.

Clinical approaches to education offer structures, processes and procedures to assist with the development of diagnostic skills and informed choices for action; however, the strength offered by their structures could result in rigid or unreflective practices that reproduce existing injustices and curtail agency. On the other hand,

praxis models of teacher education are concerned with empowerment and transformation of both the individual and the world. For teacher candidates, this means learning to assess '*their conduct and its consequences*, not just what they or others say about their conduct' (Kemmis and Smith 2008, p. 32; emphasis in original). For teacher educators and mentor teachers this means examining established power relations for the ways in which they inhibit democratic dialogue and diminish the agency of teacher candidates, communities and the students in schools for whom we share responsibility. As Zeichner et al. note, it is the 'quality of the knowledge and power relationships that exist, not the structure of the programme' (2015, p. 131) that are the important factors in teacher education. A clinical praxis approach in teacher education both appropriates and adapts medical frameworks and discourses (Kreiwaldt and Turnidge 2013), and strengthens these through incorporation of praxis approaches which are explicitly 'morally committed, and oriented and informed by tradition' (Kemmis and Smith 2008, p. 4).

4.4 The Clinical Praxis Exam

The CPE is an oral assessment task that involves a cyclical process of analysis and reflection, integrating theory, evidence, practice and evaluation. The purpose of the task is for teacher candidates to show evidence of clinical thinking and judgement in relation to student learning, by reporting on their experience of clinical praxis during their placement. The CPE assesses the teacher candidates' planning, implementation and evaluation of their practice, based on their deliberations with other educators (including mentor teachers, clinical specialists, teaching fellows, families and community organisations), their analysis of evidence, their consideration of contextual factors and their attention to the content and language demands of *what* they are teaching in relation to *who* they are teaching.

To develop and demonstrate clinical praxis, each teacher candidate is required to select a student, or small group of students, in conversation with their mentor teacher. This student or group of students may have specific learning needs or may be students for whom the teacher would like additional information about their learning. The teacher candidate then plans, implements, reflects upon and evaluates a series of learning 'interventions'. The term 'intervention' is used to denote action on the part of a teacher to assist a student to go beyond their current level of knowledge or skill; furthermore, the interventions are to take place during the course of regular classroom instruction and activities. The assessment of the needs of the student and the subsequent pedagogical responses are to be informed by research and relevant theories. In this sense, the task involves the integration of the teacher candidate's understanding of learning and teaching gained through their academic studies and their professional practice experience. The intended result is an authentic linking of teaching practice to teaching theory.

The CPE was also designed to foster close cooperation between teacher candidates, mentor teachers and university staff. The exam was piloted in 2010 and

formed a key part of assessment within the core subjects. Individual oral assessment was carried out for each of the 420 teacher candidates in the secondary programme. An oral examination was chosen as the medium for assessment in recognition that teachers, more often than not, appear to have a propensity for talking about their work, however, this talking is not always undertaken in ways that are informed by research and theoretical perspectives. The oral examination was designed to build on, and enhance, this propensity by encouraging the development of descriptive rather than judgemental language, the capacity to utilise valid evidence to support claims, and the capacity to use the theoretical and research discourses of the profession when speaking about practice. An oral examination also opened up assessment to professional dialogue between teacher candidates and assessors from the university and school sectors in the form of clinical questions that would probe and discuss the decisions made by the teacher candidates. Following Burbules' note that '[d]ialogue is ... more an expression of *praxis* than of *techne*' (1993, p. xi) the designers worked closely with assessors to assist them in asking questions that were cumulative (Alexander 2008), building on what was already known and giving rise to deeper thinking and other questions. An emphasis was placed on the content of the dialogue as well as the form. This required a shift in understanding of assessment from a final judgement of a past practice to an understanding of assessment as fundamental to ongoing development and the strengthening of critical thinking and clinical reasoning.

A rubric based on the SOLO taxonomy (Biggs 2003) was designed to assist assessors in making judgements about the level to which teacher candidates were able to draw together their academic studies with professional practice knowledge so as to improve the learning outcomes for students. The design team found the SOLO taxonomy well suited to the task of assessing the CPE because of its description of levels of increasing complexity in thinking and understanding. It was not expected that teacher candidates' efforts to improve learning would necessarily produce identifiable results during their extended placement (4 weeks), however, the teacher candidates' reasoning and pedagogical choices, and their capacity for informed reflection and action, were assessed.

The inclusion of the CPE at the heart of the Master of Teaching model reflected the commitment of course designers to the belief that teaching practice must be guided if teachers are to have reference points when developing and evaluating their teaching. It supported the claim that good teaching practice is mindful of a relatively confirmable and highly functional body of knowledge while being heavily reliant on sophisticated levels of reflexivity and an ongoing resistance to any easy determinism amongst its practitioners. Furthermore, the CPE was very much an expression of support for the notion that universities and experienced school teachers not only can but must work together to generate a more academic-minded corps of professionals.

4.5 Researching the Efficacy of the CPE

To examine the extent to which the CPE was helping to bridge the relationship between academic studies and professional practice experiences and knowledge we conducted a series of questionnaires, focus groups and interviews in 2011 before undertaking further research in 2012. In 2011, participants from the different levels of engagement with the CPE were asked to examine beliefs and understandings about: (i) the nature of teaching and learning; (ii) the form and implementation of the CPE; (iii) the importance of language and literacy to teaching and (iv) the impact of social and policy contexts to teaching. No questions asked directly about the impact of the CPE on bringing academic studies together with professional practice knowledge. Many of the questions were structured in such a way, though, that conclusions could be drawn about the teacher candidates' capacity to link the two.

Data were gathered from teacher candidates and mentor teachers via separate online questionnaires that were both voluntary and anonymous. Data were also gathered from clinical specialists and teaching fellows during small focus group discussions.

Responses were recorded, coded and categorised according to three broad areas: understandings of the nature of teaching and learning; the relationship among research, theory and practice; and the implementation of the CPE. Analysis occurred through an iterative process of examining the data as it first appeared, then comparing the data with theory and other research before returning to the data again. This process gave rise to a number of themes, some of which included concerns about the impact of the CPE on workload, gaps in understanding, and areas for improvement. In this chapter we have limited our reporting to participant responses regarding the impact of the CPE on bringing theory and practice closer together.

4.6 Research Findings

The following discussion explores the potential of the clinical praxis exam to assist teacher candidates in linking university studies and professional practice knowledge, among three key groups of participants in teacher education: (1) teacher candidates; (2) school-based staff including teaching fellows and mentor teachers; and (3) university-based staff including academics and clinical specialists.

4.6.1 *Teacher Candidates*

As noted, teacher candidates were not asked directly about how the CPE assisted them in linking education theory and classroom practice. However, when asked: 'What was the most rewarding aspect of undertaking the CPE? Or what was the

most valuable thing you learnt through undertaking the CPE?’ almost one third chose to talk about this linking, with many indicating it was *the* most valuable thing they learnt through the process.

I thought the most valuable part was seeing how it all connected together, and really putting into practice what we had learnt from Uni. I thought it was a good indication of using all knowledge from each area and applying it.

Reading what the research said on my methodology and analysing deeply why I used the strategy I used made me understand a bit more what kind of teacher I am. It also helped me find resources that are appropriate for me and will help me design better ... lessons.

Being able to directly link theory, research and practice and to try and articulate that in one case

I found the CPE valuable in relating educational theory into classroom practice. Having the opportunity to voice my experiences and pedagogical approach was incredibly rewarding and helped me to identify my own pedagogical approach.

Many teacher candidates also spoke about the impact of the CPE on the students with whom they had worked and identified this as the most rewarding aspect of the CPE. Some then went on to explain that it was the bringing together of theory and practice that assisted in working with students.

After speaking all about different theorists, this CPE really made the link between knowing a student’s learning need and a learning theorist. I had felt lost until it was time to plan and organise this CPE.

[Seeing] the difference my intervention made in the learning of my focus students. Tying theory and practice together in a hands-on exercise allowed me to better understand the link.

A number of teacher candidates also wrote about the impact the CPE had on their understanding of their academic studies, in particular, highlighting the way in which the CPE assisted them in bringing together the different elements across the programme of study at the university.

Making sure I fully understood the concept/literature and was able to put that knowledge to use in a real situation.

The most valuable thing gained from the CPE is being forced to see how the three subjects interrelate.

This last point was particularly interesting for the academic team who had worked on development of the CPE. Until the CPE, very little discussion had occurred among academics teaching in the fields of educational psychology, sociology and education, language and literacy, and the various learning areas. Each subject was taught separately and it was assumed teacher candidates would, and could, make sense of the contradictions and tensions that existed between the different fields and the conflicting demands of each subject. There also existed an unarticulated assumption that teacher candidates would be able to incorporate elements from each of these fields into their daily practice during their professional placements. However, no formal structures existed to facilitate dialogue about how this might

occur. With its emphasis on highlighting the complexity of any educational encounter and subsequent intervention, the CPE encouraged and supported conversations among university staff and school-based staff in ways that developed deeper clarity about the purposes of a clinically based programme of study. This, in turn, provided teacher candidates with strong support in developing deep understandings about the complex intellectual, diagnostic, planning, intervention, and evaluative aspects of teaching practice. The CPE also encouraged them to engage with, and respond to, the social and cultural realities of students' lives, and the linguistic and literacy demands of the subjects they were teaching. As one teacher candidate noted, 'making the links with theory encourages a more reflective approach to teaching'.

4.6.2 School-Based Teaching Fellows

Many of the school-based teaching fellows spoke about the additional time demands the CPE added to their work and the difficulty the task presented for some of the mentor teachers. These difficulties appeared to result from the shift in focus brought about by the CPE. Previously, mentor teachers and teaching fellows had understood a large part of their support for teacher candidates was to focus on the mechanics of teaching and the teacher candidate's capacity to perform in the classroom. The assumption was that if teacher candidates planned methodically, managed classroom behaviour and delivered lessons in an engaging manner, they were doing well and students were learning. The CPE focused attention on student learning as the principal aim of teacher candidates' professional placement experience. This required teacher candidates, and those with whom they worked, to develop close knowledge about each student's current levels of knowledge, understanding and skills, as well as an intimate knowledge of the content they were teaching, appropriate pedagogical content knowledge and sophisticated skills of assessment and evaluation. A number of teaching fellows described the impact of the CPE on the teacher candidates in the following ways:

The CPE focuses practice on the skill of diagnosis and intervention. It moves TCs away from content teaching to focus on process and student learning.

The CPE improves the TC's ability to plan their teaching. It hones the TC's awareness of planning and implementing an intervention strategy that genuinely integrates the three core subjects.

The course is brave enough to try something new to reinforce understanding in totality – not just in isolated subjects, as is often the case.

While some school-based teaching fellows described a number of teachers as seeing the CPE 'as another "ivory tower" task and gave minimal help' to the teacher candidates, other teaching fellows spoke about the positive impact of the task on many mentor teachers.

The CPE improves mentor teacher and teacher candidate practice. Mentors are challenged to re-think current actions.

Mentor teachers can see it as an opportunity to get the teacher candidates to work with an 'at risk' or high needs student.

Professional dialogue is enhanced

Quite a number of teaching fellows spoke about the way in which the CPE altered the relationship between mentor teachers and teacher candidates in positive ways:

The CPE strengthened professional conversations between teaching fellows and mentor teachers. [The CPE] affirmed the mentor teacher's role as important to development of teacher candidates. Some mentor teachers learned from teacher candidate's research.

One teaching fellow noted that some mentor teachers 'can resent teacher candidates who intervene with a student who the mentor teacher is not handling well'. Other teaching fellows spoke about the impact of the CPE on their own practice indicating that it 'enhanced' and 'improved' their understanding of the university programme.

[I developed a] new awareness of the integration and the overall clinical intervention teaching practice model of the M. Teach.

Now see the need for teacher candidates to address each of the core subjects in balanced way.

Some teaching fellows described feeling 'more connected to the university' and felt that the task promoted greater 'reflection on their own teaching' and helped develop their 'understanding of the individual needs [of] students'.

4.6.3 School-Based Mentor Teachers

A number of mentor teachers indicated that the task facilitated relationship building between themselves and the teacher candidates through shared collection of data, choice of focus student and shared decision-making of pedagogical interventions. Almost one in five mentor teachers indicated that the CPE had had a positive impact on their own teaching,

Further to this, most respondents expressed interest in training and education associated with the CPE: as professional development; to further the partnerships between schools and the university; to develop mentoring skills; and to enhance the relationships with the teacher candidates.

Of particular note is that most mentor teachers indicated the need for further work to ensure that all mentor teachers were fully cognisant of the ways in which the task could support the linking of theory and practice. These data were instructive for the academic team of researchers, whose intention was to design a task that would essentially draw on the daily work teacher candidates were undertaking with students in classrooms, and not additional work. Data emphasised the imperative of working closely with mentor teachers around teacher candidate assessment, and more broadly the vision of the Master of Teaching. These data

provided impetus for the revision of the task, and in particular the development of professional learning initiatives for mentor teachers around clinical praxis imperatives.

4.6.4 University-Based Academics and Clinical Specialists

In 2012, a further project was undertaken to gain an understanding of the ways in which academic staff working in the Master of Teaching (Secondary) were experiencing the connections between theory and practice facilitated by the clinical model, and leveraged by the CPE. This project involved 12 in depth semi-structured interviews with a range of staff either supporting candidates in schools as clinical specialists or working in the academic programme, either in discipline specific learning areas, or a range of academic subjects, including the core subjects in which the CPE is assessed. While the results and analysis of this project are the focus of a separate article in preparation, and the CPE was not the focus of this research per se, it is worth noting that of the staff members interviewed, all those working in both the academic and school-based programme (eight participants) identified the CPE as a catalyst for shifting their thinking about teacher preparation. Participants also identified ways in which the CPE had impacted on the delivery and content of their academic subjects in assisting with the linking of theory and practice. One academic, who works as both a school-based teaching fellow and an academic learning area specialist said:

The CPE is fundamentally important – from the point of view of seeing the outcome students are moving towards at the end of semester. It is instrumental in my discussions with mentor teachers, as to what TCs may be wanting to research [and] why they are collecting data. In terms of the learning area it has helped me to really emphasise what we do need to focus on in semester.

The notion that the CPE was providing a link between the university and the site of practice was also emphasised by another academic who was working as a learning area specialist on campus, and also one day a week in a school as a clinical specialist. For this academic, the CPE oriented the academic subjects towards the school, and served as an example of how assessment in the Master of Teaching might be considered differently:

I think the CPE is a key – significant- not so much that it is [drawing together] three common subjects, but because it is absolutely grounded in school, and on an individual in a school. I think it has shifted everyone's thinking.

As will be discussed more fully in a forthcoming article focussed on this project, this 'shift in thinking' pertained most strongly to those who had access to the CPE, through either teaching in a core subject or through a school-based clinical role. For these academics, the CPE offered a framework for thinking differently about the integrated nature of theory and practice in a clinical model of pre-service teacher education, and revealed that these staff members saw themselves as occupying and

nurturing the space of praxis. For those whose roles did not provide the opportunity to facilitate or assess this task, understandings of clinical praxis were more varied and diffused. This has pointed to both the value of a shared articulation of the nexus between theory and practice, and the value of curriculum and assessment innovations drawing together academic study and placement sites.

4.7 CPE Developments Since 2012

Since 2012, the CPE has been a significant factor in furthering the partnerships between the university and schools and consolidating the ways in which both university and school-based staff view the links between academic studies and professional practice knowledge. The inclusion of school-based staff (teaching fellows) on CPE assessment panels (from 2011) and the professional development associated with this involvement has been a factor in a number of school-based staff attaining university-based employment as teachers in the Master of Teaching coursework subjects. Conversely, the CPE has provided an impetus for school-based professional development, run by university staff. The CPE has also provided a focus for clinical specialists, teaching fellows and mentor teachers to frame their discussions of classroom observations; furthermore, significant numbers of teacher candidates have commented that their interviews for employment comprised discussion of their approaches to the CPE. All of these factors have contributed to the CPE becoming more understood in the partnership schools. One illustration of this is the way in which a number of partnership schools have adapted the CPE as a vehicle for staff appraisal. In one such school, the teacher performance review process utilises the CPE format so that practising teachers reflect on their use of classroom data and framing theory as a means to evaluate their own professional development. Associated with this growing understanding of clinical praxis in partnership schools has been the development of two university courses aimed at practising teachers: the Professional Certificate of Clinical Teaching, first implemented in 2012; and the online Master of Clinical Teaching, offered for the first time in 2016. While both of these courses explore clinical practice broadly, the links between theory and practice are fundamental to their design, with CPE examples providing useful modelling for course participants.

4.8 Conclusion

Increased attention to the educational performance of nations has resulted in international concern with the quality and relevance of teacher preparation programmes. In Australia, governmental interest in pre-service teacher education programmes resulted in the formation of a Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, and the subsequent publication of a report (2015) emphasising the need for

pre-service teachers to be *classroom ready* at the conclusion of their pre-service preparation. Clearly, the key to classroom readiness lies in the ways in which pre-service programmes are able to offer teacher candidates opportunities to negotiate the nexus between their academic studies and professional practice knowledge—to embrace praxis—and ensure that rich professional practice experiences are supported by rigorous investigations of relevant theory and research.

The research conducted in conjunction with the implementation of the CPE has revealed that while there are challenges and complexities in implementing curriculum and assessment items that transcend and redefine the traditional boundaries of school and university, the affordances for teacher candidates are significant. In his paper for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School leadership (AITSL), *Standardised Assessment of Initial Teacher Education: Environmental Scan and Case Studies*, William Louden concluded that the CPE is reflective of best practice in teacher education assessment, and could be extended nationally (Louden 2015, p. 33). Further to this, the CPE innovation in the Melbourne Master of Teaching has shown the potential for assessment undertaken during a pre-service programme to not only leverage the potential of a clinical model of teaching for teacher candidates, but to enhance the praxis of all concerned with the programme, including university academics and school-based staff.

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Jefferson Kinsman is a teacher educator in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. After studying Philosophy, Law and Literature, he taught for 14 years in high schools in Melbourne. He now specialises in preparing Humanities teachers for the classroom, in relation to which he is currently undertaking a Ph.D.

Catherine Reid is a lecturer in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. Catherine lectures in a number of Masters programs, and most recently, was part of a team who developed an online Master of Clinical Teaching. Catherine's research interests include school- university partnerships, and 21st century literacies across the curriculum.

Debra Tyler lectures in Sociology of Education at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. Debra, in particular, is involved in the rural teaching program and the coordination of both an international and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching placement for pre-service teachers.

Daniela Acquaro is the Program Coordinator of the Master of Teaching Secondary in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. As a Senior Lecturer in Teacher Education, her research focuses on initial teacher education, teacher effectiveness and teachers' lives. She is also interested in teacher preparation for alternative and global educational settings.