



Making Authentic and Trustworthy Practice-based Judgements of Graduating Student Teachers

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Introduction

This project investigates how four primary schools and one university work together within a reconceptualised practicum relationship to provide valid, reliable judgements of student teachers' readiness to teach. The project will identify authentic, trustworthy assessment strategies and processes that enhance student teacher learning in practice and the quality of beginning teachers.

Aims

Given limited research evidence, it is not clear on what basis New Zealand tertiary institutions and schools make judgements about students teachers' achievement against the learning outcomes of the practicum and Graduating Teachers Standards or how issues to do with reliability and validity of judgements are addressed.

Within an already established strong working partnership between the university and four Auckland primary schools this project aims, over the two years of the study, to

- (i) identify, develop and test models of practicum-related assessment processes and strategies used by the four case-study schools
- (ii) identify, develop and test models of the criteria cues that are used when judgements of a student teacher's achievement of the learning outcomes of the practicum, and their readiness to teach, are made, and
- (iii) consider the implications of the developed models of the assessment of student teacher learning for the practice of making decisions about student teachers' readiness to teach.

The overall research questions for this project are

- How is graduating students' readiness to teach ascertained by those who judge them in diverse practice settings?
- To what extent are those judgements authentic, trustworthy and evidence-based?'

Why is this important?

The practicum is a critical, high-stakes part of ITE for student teachers, for schools and for a quality teaching profession. It is therefore essential that schools and providers work together to identify and design authentic and trustworthy assessment strategies and processes for the practicum to serve both formative and accountability functions. The challenge is to develop conceptually strong and functional model(s) that will enhance teacher learning in practice and provide credible, dependable and fair judgements of student teachers' readiness to teach.

What we plan to do

Data

The study is a two-year mixed method study conducted in four case study schools. Within the four case studies the university-based and teacher researchers in the wider research team will carry out both individual and focus group interviews to identify assessment strategies used within the practicum setting; keep records of discussions between university liaison lecturers, principals, adjunct lecturers and approximately 30 associate teachers related to assessment decision-making; collect documents and carry out document analysis in order to identify the cues that are used when teacher educators make judgements of a student teacher's achievement of the practicum learning outcomes and their readiness to teach. In the second year a statistical approach will be applied to the teachers' cue data to allow us to capture individual assessor's judgement policies.

Analysis

Qualitative data will be analysed thematically and temporally. Findings will also be analysed in relation to contextual factors, programme intentions and NZTC Graduating Teacher Standards. In the second year a statistical multiple correlation/regression approach will be applied.

Our partners:

The four partnership schools are Newmarket Primary, Prospect Primary, Point Chevalier Primary and Sylvia Park Primary. The teacher researchers are the principals and adjunct lecturers (the person in charge of the student teachers assigned to their schools). They are: Dr Wendy Kofoed and Virginia Kung (Newmarket); Gay Turner and Kathy Reid (Prospect); Sandra Aitken and Phil Spriggs (Point Chevalier); and Barbara A'alatoa and Joan Maitland (Sylvia Park).

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