

# Optimizing opportunities to learn during practicum: Developing collaborative partnerships between the university and school.

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This article reports on a collaboration between a university lecturer and a school-based coordinator at one school as they sought to reframe the final practicum of a three year teacher education degree. The study, as part of a larger project, involved the development and implementation of a partnership model. While the model developed was successful in terms of opportunities to optimize professional learning and strengthen the links between the school and university, it was found that the time needed to achieve the goals of a professional and academic partnership was substantial. The positioning of the university and the school in partnership during the practicum was central to the quality and effectiveness of this project but the success of such a partnership cannot be assumed. This study has resulted in renewed understanding and respect for our separate and collaborative responsibilities in supporting student teachers to learn about teaching, while teaching. (*Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 2011, 12(3),183-194).

Keywords: school-university partnerships, collaboration, practicum

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## INTRODUCTION

This article reports our work as a university liaison lecturer and a school-based adjunct lecturer in one school as part of a larger pilot project resulting from a review of the traditional model of practicum within a three year Bachelor of Education degree (Grudnoff & Williams, 2010). The qualification includes 20 weeks of practicum, spread over the three years, which provides the opportunity to apply what is learned in a range of primary classroom settings. In addition to their academic and practicum requirements, graduating students must meet the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC) Graduating Teacher Standards (GTS) (2007) which include professional knowledge, practices, values and relationships as well as the NZTC requirements which consider the *good character* and *fit to be a teacher* qualities of each graduate.

The project was underpinned by a belief in the importance of this final practicum in optimizing the opportunities students have to succeed and, as a consequence, in the critical role the university liaison lecturer, adjunct lecturer and associate teachers play in the preparation of beginning teachers. In accepting our roles within the project, not initially as practicum specialists, but simply as a commitment to practicum in general, we adopted informal inquiry processes to explore, document, apply and reflect on the characteristics of a model of a university- and school-based partnership designed to optimize student teacher learning about teaching. Our goal was to identify more effective ways in which practicum could support the new graduates to be prepared for their beginning teacher year.

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The purpose of the wider pilot project was to investigate ways that a closer relationship between the faculty and schools during the practicum might support students in their transition to their beginning teacher year.

It was anticipated that establishing reciprocal relationships between school and university staff would help to bridge the perceived divide between the academic and the practical aspects of initial teacher education. Strengthened collaborative professional relationships for the university liaison lecturer, the adjunct lecturer and the associate teachers would help to generate, endorse and sustain the different forms of knowledge, skills and understanding both sectors contribute to the practicum experience of student teachers. As practicum partnership coordinators at one site within the larger pilot project, we were charged with exploring how this might be achieved.

Our own professional relationship in the project began at a meeting of all schools involved in the project and rapidly developed into a workable one-site partnership. While our focus was primarily on the practicum team (the adjunct lecturer, the university liaison lecturer and the four associate teachers,) we considered the school staff as a whole while planning for the ten weeks the four student teachers would be assigned to the school. From the outset, we ensured all those immediately involved were familiar with the practicum brief and with the school's policies and principles around practicum responsibilities and requirements.

Central to the establishment of our partnership was acknowledgement of shared expertise and the expectation that trusting and respectful professional relationships would be developed between each school and the faculty. We acknowledged that, typically in initial teacher education, the university is held responsible for the theoretical and academic dimensions of teacher education while the school focus is usually directed towards professional practice. Through collaboration, however, we sought to offer all participants concerned an optimum opportunity to learn together *"about teaching while teaching"* (emphasis added, Grudnoff, & Tuck, 2003, p.33).

#### COLLABORATIVE PRACTICUM PARTNERSHIP

A wide range of literature was reviewed in relation to initial teacher education, school-based professional development in general and professional learning communities in particular. The significant consensus of opinion found directed our approach. To support student teachers effectively in our practicum setting, there needed to be equal respect for, and confidence in, those who guided the learning in both the university and the school setting (Hagger, & McIntyre, 2006; Odell, & Huling, 2000; Portner, 2005). A collaborative partnership needed to be supported by expert modeling, observation, discussion, feedback and critical reflection (Donovan, Bransford, & Pellegrino, 1999; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Hagger, Burn, Mutton, & Brindley, 2008; Timperley, 2008) which would integrate the expertise of both the university and the school sites.

Having established the foundations of our own relationship as practicum partnership coordinators, we invited all members of the practicum team to help develop the pedagogical connections between our espoused theories (Osterman, & Kottkamp, 1993) and current literature. Working to disseminate this learning through wider staff professional learning forums (Timperley, Parr, & Hulsbosch, 2008; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007), we aimed to develop our student support practices strategically and effectively within what we viewed as a professional learning community (Timperley, 2008).

A structured framework that supported the practicum team to engage in and reflect on our own learning was essential. Cameron, Berger, Lovett, and Baker (2007) advise that professional guidance practices are best aligned to effective teacher professional guidance processes. It was, therefore, to the school professional development and appraisal processes that we looked when establishing our partnership core practices. We believed that this was essential within a partnership that aimed to ease the student teachers' transition to early-career teaching.

Timperley et al. (2007) describe a range of principles and conditions necessary for effective teacher learning. Significant among these are opportunities where "meanings of new knowledge and the implications for practice were negotiated with providers and colleagues" (p. xlv). They argue that "...a professional community that supported the new ideas and practice at the same time as it challenged existing ones and focused on teaching-learning links" (p. xlvi) presents opportunity for iterative learning for those involved. Embedded in this model is the notion that no one partner need necessarily be an expert, and that all participants will be both learners and leaders on occasion (Hagger, & McIntyre, 2006; Timperley et al., 2008). Iterative inquiry processes and knowledge-building cycles (Timperley et al., 2008) promote theorized and reflective movement towards valued teacher practices for each of the partners involved (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). We surmised that a learning community established on such principles had the potential to incorporate a student teacher's circuitous pathway towards expertise. Such an integrated professional learning community within a collaborative partnership was our ideal. In our view, the snapshot observation and assessment of student teachers in the past, usually by a visiting lecturer without significant knowledge of the student or teaching/learning context, did little to inspire confidence or ensure success for anyone involved. We acknowledged that student teachers bring their own myriad attitudinal, dispositional and experiential skills and understanding to the practicum. Our collective challenge was to find a consistent approach that would bridge the gap between the forms of theory and practice deemed to be of value as a teacher but which are often gained haphazardly and in variable contexts at both sites (Timperley, & Alton Lee, 2008). We viewed each of the members of this collaborative partnership as an integral part of the whole.

#### FIRST THINGS FIRST

During our initial meeting as practicum partnership coordinators, we explored our own perceptions of the brief we had been given and quickly discovered consistency in our professional views and approaches to initial teacher education, teacher development and in our expectations of the roles we would take responsibility for. We would reflect on the critical value of this consistency on many occasions during the practicum. We both expected to engage on equal and equitable terms and held a similar understanding of what this meant in practice. Moreover, we both knew of the importance of modeling the commitment and support that we would expect of the others involved. In order to effectively lead the inquiry and reflection processes we were committing to, we agreed both to utilize our individual strengths and to work collaboratively.

As practicum partnership coordinators, we agreed to a number of shared aspirations for the practicum which, in some respects, went beyond the conventional way in which practicum had been conducted:

- The partnership and all processes arising from it would be jointly brokered by both parties;
- There would be commitment to the practicum by all parties involved;
- Current literature and the realities of everyday school life would underpin the development of the partnership; and
- There would be shared responsibility in the partnership alliance.

These aspirations were then planned for and made explicit in practice.

## PARTICIPANTS

The setting for the project was a mid-decile (socio-economic status), suburban Auckland, New Zealand, school with a roll of 500 children and 18 classroom teachers. The school comprised a diverse range of ethnicity, language and background, typical of this part of the city. The four associate teachers had previous experience working with student teachers but not all had been responsible for students in a final practicum. The adjunct lecturer was one of the two associate principals in the school and was fully released from classroom teaching duties. The university liaison lecturer assumed a role within the practicum team as part of her professional and academic workload. The principal's leadership and commitment to the success of the practicum was strong, active and significant to the stated goals of the project.

## CONTEXT

While there was a detailed formal brief in place for the practicum, the data developed organically from the context, issues, processes and personalities involved. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) describe schools as research sites where a lifelong professional commitment to learning about teaching is critical to effective practice. Punch (2009) views educational research as being the gathering of empirical evidence through observation and the experience of participants: "The key concept is observable information about [some aspect of] the world" (pp. 2-3). For our purposes, this was not only an investigation into the theoretical and practical dimensions of the partnership but an iterative, real-time process of becoming rather than being an education professional. To this end, it was our collective exploration of the brief and the data we gathered naturally as a result of the roles that we assumed in the partnership that informed our joint experience and, as a consequence, the professional observations in this article.

## DATA GATHERING

The key focus was the practicum team, with the associate teachers viewed as part of a group rather than operating in isolation. We used anecdotal records, formal and informal classroom observations from a range of personnel (including the principal) and records of all meetings to look critically, analytically and compassionately at the practicum team's progress and to guide the involvement of participants in the project. We also analyzed data related to the student teachers' progress. Within the context of this collaborative partnership, our own professional learning conversations were logged throughout the practicum. Decisions were based on the needs of the practicum team as a whole and informed by the formal qualification requirements of the practicum, and the NZTCGTS (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007). We were constantly mindful of our obligation to utilize these two key

documents to inform our understanding of student success and therefore to guide our professional expectations of the practicum team alongside our own research-informed concept of a school-university partnership.

Aspects of the school's teacher-appraisal format were also applied to the practicum team's work with the student teachers and this provided the opportunity for further scaffolding and documentation. Utilizing this format also provided contextual evidence for inclusion in the associate teachers' own professional appraisal process. Because of confidentiality requirements, however, the associate teachers' professional appraisal goals could not inform our work. Had appropriate processes been in place from the outset, data from the associate teachers' professional appraisal goals might have informed the development of the partnership model.

## FINDINGS

### *Partnership Jointly Brokered by Both Parties*

As practicum partnership coordinators, we worked to develop a coordinated professional relationship based on trust and transparency so we could work together to affirm successes, to problem-solve and make difficult decisions if called for. This meant being prepared to challenge ourselves and each other as well as other practicum personnel including the associate teachers, to give clear and honest feedback, and to deliver any difficult message explicitly and honestly. It meant constantly working to ensure we both understood and trusted the academic and professional foundations of the project and we articulated this carefully so that others could, in turn, trust us. We needed to model our own engagement in the project. We were fortunate that our own relationship, both professional and personal, developed quickly and effectively.

### *Commitment to the Practicum*

We found that a focus on partnership meant seeing ourselves as agents of change (Wang & Odell, 2002). Both the alignment in our approach and an ability to challenge each other's thinking as practicum partnership coordinators was fundamental to the sense of over-all partnership in regard to practicum at this site. Our ability to present as a cohesive unit was critical. Furthermore, the time taken to explore and identify consistencies and variances at the outset was both imperative and extensive. Time was essential for sharing, negotiating, deconstructing and interrogating our own professional, academic and pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) as well that of the associate teachers. Forming dependable and trusting relationships took time. Adopting a collaborative inquiry approach to what happens in the classroom, not just relying on right or wrong judgments about each other's practice (Timperley, 2001; Wang & Odell, 2002) took time also. We both believed in the importance of investing time to establish a collaborative partnership that would effect confidence in each other.

### *Partnership founded in Theory and in the Reality of Everyday School Life*

Much as school leaders place teachers at the center of their work and learning so that they can place the students at the center of theirs, we placed the associate teachers at the center of our work and learning so that they could place the student teachers at the center of theirs. As a starting point, it was necessary to define and manage induction for the student teachers.

We tried to mirror the induction all new teachers encounter as they embark on their career and began by including them as full staff members from the very first teachers' professional planning days (Teacher Only Days) held prior to the school year beginning. All expectations of a fully functioning early-career staff member were required of the student teachers; from professional development meeting attendance to playground duties. We found this to be a key step in establishing the new culture of the practicum for us all.

From the associate teachers' perspective, induction necessitates on-going and iterative guidance of student teachers into the consciousness of a teacher and the realities of the profession (Portner, 2005) as is required by the three domains of the NZTCGTS: professional knowledge, professional practice, and professional values and relationships (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007). We believe that to achieve these standards, the student teacher must be secure, well supported and expertly mentored in the professional learning community they belong to for the length of their practicum experience. We were deliberate and constantly reflective in our establishment of this community. It was the importance of the professional community and our co-thinker role with the associate teachers as mentors and the complexities inherent in this that we continually needed to reflect on and try to build into the partnership and our professional practices.

Regular professional meetings were scheduled amongst and between the practicum team. By providing links to university programs and course content, the university liaison lecturer shared current pedagogical theory, research and practice. Modeling her own on-going professional learning and connection to the wider professional learning community, the adjunct lecturer drew together key academic and professional literature and classroom-based examples for support, motivation and inspiration. Both sources of input provided a base for a theorized and research-informed, carefully planned and aligned approach for shared learning. These opportunities were not limited to the four associate teachers on the practicum team. Other teachers were invited to take part in professional reading and discussion. With the encouragement of the principal, a school mentor team was established to reflect critically on usual practice in the light of theory, research and practice and to help the student teachers confidently assume a full teacher role as quickly as possible. Of significance was the willingness of the teachers throughout the school to share this responsibility and the opportunities that were afforded by this network to develop new mentors on the school staff.

#### *Shared Responsibility within the Partnership*

Regular conversations and our own reflections and evaluations strengthened our confidence in the partnership and our knowledge of the practicum context. We made it our business to sharpen our focus on each student teacher's practicum goals and the actions required to realize them. Concerns which arose were addressed as promptly and collectively as practical, and we worked hard to ensure that communication was clear, well understood by all parties involved, and well documented. For example, one student teacher was unable to continue with the practicum and once the decision had been made to withdraw the student, follow-through with each party concerned was consistent and based on a strong and triangulated framework of oral and written evidence. This assisted more confident decision-making and helped us to function independently when required.

The associate teachers were encouraged to contribute as a team to the practicum and they were introduced to the student teachers as such. This practicum team focus enabled the associate teachers' differentiated curriculum strengths, professional delegations and specific

areas of expertise, as relevant to the practicum requirements, to be shared with the student teacher group. The aim was to engender a collective professional approach and lessen the possibility of a negative one-on-one situation occurring and isolating any participant. The student teachers were encouraged to see each associate teacher as a possible mentor and they responded positively to the security this shared message provided. The associate teachers were encouraged to view each other in the same light, fostering not only the team presence but internal team support. Indeed, when one of the associate teachers had to take leave, another simply stepped in to support the student teacher. When classroom release time was built into the student teachers' full-class responsibility timetables, it was because associate teacher members of the practicum team viewed it as important for the student teachers' ability to find time to share and reflect together during those vital weeks. It was the associate teachers who requested that they release their own student teachers for this purpose.

The partnership approach, and the expectation that informal classroom walk-throughs and more formal observations around a negotiated aspect of the student teachers' practice, meant the observation load was more widely distributed. The communication between the observers and the observed was critical, and although often conducted in brief time snatched from the teaching day, a collaborative sense of responsibility for the student teachers developed. While acknowledging that each member of the practicum team would have their own story to tell, as practicum partnership coordinators we perceived a general sense of cohesiveness and willingness to share amongst the team.

The decision-making vested in the practicum partnership coordinators was not regarded as ours alone. Identifying manageable and effective ways to develop the leadership capacity of the associate teachers and others in the school became central to our work. The professional development opportunities for discussion and support that we scheduled and organized involved the principal and quickly became a priority for those involved in the practicum or wanting to be involved in the future. The adjunct lecturer's own course of academic study in educational mentoring provided a direct and immediate bridge between the university and the school on a weekly basis.

## DISCUSSION

This is a report based on the experience of two practicum partnership coordinators; a very personal perspective, but one based on the observable world of the practicum as we experienced it over this ten-week period (Punch, 2009). While acknowledging the limitations of this, much of what was achieved was through the intertwining networks of professional practice and support that were inherent in the learning communities to which we belong. The key element, in what we believe to have been a successful project, was the genuine willingness of those involved to fulfill their part and that began with our own commitment. It was our role as practicum partnership coordinators to establish, encourage and maintain this as our joint responsibility.

From our individual vantage points, as university lecturer and school-based coordinator, we sought to understand and to be understood. It was essential, we believed, that we demonstrated a commitment to relationship building, negotiation and facilitation if we were to provide credible leadership. It was also necessary to be, and to be seen to be, involved and available. At times this was particularly challenging when availability was dependent on a raft of other professional and academic responsibilities. The time involved was significant in the early stages of the project but, once relationships were established and a time line of

practicum events was in place, the project seemed to become more manageable. We were fortunate in that our own professional relationship was forged quickly and effectively. We now firmly believe that judicious selection of the university liaison lecturer and adjunct lecturer is essential if the two are to successfully negotiate the pathway to a collaborative partnership together and with the rest of the team.

In our view, the collaborative approach to partnership was more significant than any other factor in enhancing the student teachers' opportunities to learn about the real work of teaching (Grudnoff, & Tuck, 2003). This occurred through their inclusion within an integrated professional learning community where each team member, from the students themselves to the principal, was committed to optimizing the opportunities inherent in the practicum. Strong and principled school leadership was imperative. The induction processes, as a crucial first step in this, ensured that the relational foundations for all involved were secure, transparently embedded in established school policies and practices, and promoted through the partnership. In order to support and guide the student teachers' ability to explore the ground that a teacher stands on, it was necessary that we offered them that ground together. This required that we understood and facilitated an iterative process of exploration and application which operated within the social, academic and professional networks of the school, university and community. The formal student teacher requirements from the practicum brief were echoed in partnership community-practice outcomes.

Time was at once the most challenging, and the most promising, implication of the study. The associate teachers were aware from the beginning that more time than is typical for a practicum would be needed and, while they were supported to work collectively where possible and to use time allocations within their timetables expediently, this posed a constant dilemma as they balanced the practicum role against their other responsibilities within the classroom and across the school. Our own input as practicum partnership coordinators was considerably more time-consuming than a usual practice practicum, but a willingness to make time by all parties concerned was a vital factor in the success of the undertaking. This required on-going negotiation, and flexibility and compromise. The time given up for all those working within the partnership was hard won and even more difficult to keep in balance, but a clear and fair commitment to the timetable and to the actual time line of events had significant implications for what we were able to achieve over the ten weeks the student teachers were in the school. Due to the significance afforded the project by both school and faculty leadership, we were able to value time as an investment rather than view it as a constraint.

The associate teachers needed and, we believed, came to value, the freedom to own the role of mentors and to be validated for their efforts as professional partners in the process. Deepened understandings through collaboration and shared learning has strengthened school practices, and broadened the commitment of the school leadership to on-going growth in this area. This is evidenced by a genuine focus, in both policy and practice, on new teacher development and support structures for associate teachers, tutor teachers and senior teachers. Of note is the encouragement from school leadership to share the outcomes of the project and to continue on-site and tertiary-level learning. Likewise, the Faculty leadership's efforts to engage academic staff in dialogue with schools has generated a renewed awareness of the complex nature of practice-based learning, the rich research resource that schools offer, and an enthusiasm for the possibilities inherent in this relationship. The current research

environment and expectations in the university provide impetus and opportunity for professional inquiry and application.

Grudnoff and Tuck (2003) suggest that “in an ideal world the teacher educators and the schools will be involved in a partnership and have a shared understanding of what constitutes good teaching and good teacher education” (p. 39). After a full year of such a partnership, with all the trial and effort that inquiry of this nature involves, our own learning has been significant and we have benefited enormously from the experience. We certainly have more informed ideas about what might constitute good teaching and learning, and good teacher education but also our mutual understanding of the job each does has shifted considerably.

We acknowledge the limitations of such a small scale study and the tentative nature of any generalizations that can be drawn. This is, however, an area of practice worthy of further investigation. The contribution of the research-based learning provided to student teachers in the university alongside the practitioner-guided learning during practicum has engendered in us a deep sense of responsibility that has refreshed our own professional practice and personal commitment. We have an obligation to practicum practices that enable the two to work in unison. It will, however, be necessary to investigate other partnership arrangements at other sites to better understand the implications of what has occurred.

#### IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the most challenging aspects of taking on new ideas as an experienced practitioner is the nature of the challenge itself; new learning and new practices that confront and, at times, confound our personal and professional status quo. It takes effort to shift beliefs and practice. Given a supportive partnership, however, and a willingness to make changes and to take risks within a carefully negotiated professional framework for practicum, we have demonstrated that it may be possible for everyone involved to hit the ground running; if not at high speed, then at least with more confidence and direction than we possessed at the beginning of the project.

So what did help us to bridge the gap between academic learning and the practicum experience? The adjunct lecturer was the lynchpin for practicum and accepted primary responsibility for the learning while teaching the dimension of teacher education alongside the university’s responsibility for learning about teaching.

- There was clear communication between all parties, and risk-taking, as we challenged our habituated processes, was encouraged.
- Well-aligned and well documented understandings and expectations were established between the practicum partnership coordinators and across the team.
- Responsibility for the highly iterative and reciprocal nature of our work was embedded in the model and taken up by both the university and the school in partnership.
- Professional reading and discussion was actively encouraged and time was made available for this.
- The time required to achieve best practice during practicum was viewed as essential and was made available by the school and the university.

- The selection of practitioners and academics who were not only skilled in their respective fields but committed to making changes to the usual practice, was critical to the success of the project.

None of these factors can be assumed and each must be planned for and adequately resourced in order to realize a successful outcome. While skilled and committed professionals who willingly support such a partnership might be found within both settings, goodwill alone will not sustain this essential transformation in teacher education. The varied roles that lecturers and teachers are called on to undertake make resourcing such an approach an increasingly challenging task. Nonetheless, the importance and obligation to undertake changes of this nature to the practicum cannot be denied.

With the current global emphasis on student achievement, teacher quality and accountability, attention to the fit of credible and high-quality practicum experiences for student teachers requires considerable thought and planning. Skilled staff in both the university and school settings who can combine the academic- and practice-based dimensions of teacher education within a professionally satisfying and personally manageable workload can be identified, professionally developed and well rewarded. If university and school leadership share in the responsibility for this, there is opportunity for the meaning of partnership to be widely explored and for partnership relationships that uphold theoretically informed and research-based shared learning to be positioned securely at the heart of the practicum.

## CONCLUSION

The opportunity to strengthen the value of teacher education through partnership will be costly but must not be compromised by the myriad of competing organizational, structural, financial and educational requirements that both the universities and the schools face. If a rationale is needed, then it lies in New Zealand's learner-centered and integrated approach to a values-based program of teaching and learning competencies (Ministry of Education, 2007). Like many other curricula worldwide, The New Zealand Curriculum signals a philosophical shift from curriculum-specific content prescriptions to context-based inquiry learning. Surely this requires that teacher education adjusts accordingly to support student teachers in a university- and school-based program of study which is inquiry-based, theorized, research-informed, practical and collaborative. Theory and research may remain largely the university's domain and professional practice that of the school but we believe that diverse twenty-first century educational reality necessitates a partnership. With practicum learning sited in a partnership of the nature described in this report, our new teachers would be best prepared to play an active and effective role in children's achievement and well-being (Wang & Odell, 2002).

In the end, however, this level of partnership is unlikely to survive without an ongoing commitment from the university to provide academic mentors and access to professional development for university staff, associate teachers and school coordinators. This is, without doubt, a critical implication of this small study and one to test further in future. The schools in turn, have an essential role in the provision of dedicated practicum coordinators and to regard their sites as rich resource for this further study and development of pedagogical principle and practice.

While the limitations of our work are obvious, continued research within the larger practicum project will test the conclusions we have drawn. We argue that there is no alternative to genuinely and tangibly sustaining partnered, educative mentoring with a professional learning community in order to ensure that student teachers have optimum opportunity to hit the ground running as beginning teachers.

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The Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative education (APJCE) arose from a desire to produce an international forum for discussion of cooperative education, or work integrated learning (WIL), issues for practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region and is intended to provide a mechanism for the dissemination of research, best practice and innovation in work-integrated learning. The journal maintains close links to the biennial Asia-Pacific regional conferences conducted by the World Association for Cooperative Education. In recognition of international trends in information technology, APJCE is produced solely in electronic form. Published papers are available as PDF files from the website, and manuscript submission, reviewing and publication is electronically based. In 2010, Australian Research Council (ARC), which administers the Excellence in Research (ERA) ranking system, awarded APJCE a 'B' ERA ranking (top 10-20%).

Cooperative education/WIL in the journal is taken to be work-based learning in which the time spent in the workplace forms an integrated part of an academic program of study. More specifically, cooperative education/WIL can be described as a strategy of applied learning which is a structured program, developed and supervised either by an educational institution in collaboration with an employer or industry grouping, or by an employer or industry grouping in collaboration with an educational institution. An essential feature is that relevant, productive work is conducted as an integral part of a student's regular program, and the final assessment contains a work-based component. Cooperative education/WIL programs are commonly highly structured and possess formal (academic and employer) supervision and assessment. The work is productive, in that the student undertakes meaningful work that has economic value or definable benefit to the employer. The work should have clear linkages with, or add to, the knowledge and skill base of the academic program.

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The editorial board welcomes contributions from authors with an interest in cooperative education/WIL. Manuscripts should comprise reports of relevant research, or essays that discuss innovative programs, reviews of literature, or other matters of interest to researchers or practitioners. Manuscripts should be written in a formal, scholarly manner and avoid the use of sexist or other terminology that reinforces stereotypes. The excessive use of abbreviations and acronyms should be avoided. All manuscripts are reviewed by two members of the editorial board. APJCE is produced in web-only form and published articles are available as PDF files accessible from the website <http://www.apjce.org>.

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Manuscripts and cover sheets (available from the website) should be forwarded electronically to the Editor-in-Chief. In order to ensure integrity of the review process authors' names should not appear on manuscripts. Manuscripts should be between 3,000 and 5,000 words, include pagination, be double-spaced with ample margins in times new-roman 12-point font and follow the style of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association in citations, referencing, tables and figures (see also, <http://www.apa.org/journals/faq.html>). The intended location of figures and diagrams, provided separately as high-quality files (e.g., JPG, TIFF or PICT), should be indicated in the manuscript. Figure and table captions, listed on a separate page at the end of the document, should be clear and concise and be understood without reference to the text.



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