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Illuminating the assessment of practicum
in New Zealand early childhood initial teacher education

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Abstract

Practicum is a core feature of initial teacher education. It is the site of induction and mentoring, intended to support the student teacher in their move from neophyte to graduating teacher. Practicum is seen by many to be the most powerful influence in shaping student teachers' practice. Practicum is also a key point of assessment within the initial teacher education programme, leading to a determination of the student's professional development and readiness to teach.

This study illuminates the way in which assessment of practicum was enacted and experienced in four representative New Zealand initial teacher education institutions, offering a critical examination of institutional policy and practice, as well as the experiences of practicum participants – student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator. Informed by the writings of Barbara Rogoff (2003) a multi-phase, mixed methods QUAL/Quan research design (Creswell, 2003) was utilised to foreground institutional, interpersonal and intrapersonal factors that shaped the lived experiences of practicum assessment. In Phase One, key informant interviews with institutional representatives provided understanding of the policies and practices that define the assessment framework for each institution. In Phase Two, an online survey completed by seventy-four student teachers, twenty-six associate teachers and twenty teacher educators captured the experiences of key participants and their descriptions of the strengths and challenges of practicum assessment. Phase Three comprised a case study of one practicum triad from each institution. Interviews with the triad participants examined the way in which assessment of practicum was conducted in the context of relationships, highlighting the critical influence of the interactions between the triad members.

Key findings support a view of practicum assessment as complex and multi-faceted, enacted with institutional parameters, but highly individualised in practice. The need for greater transparency and rigour in assessment practices is implicated in the findings of this study, as well as the importance of meaningful collaboration between participants that addresses entrenched hierarchical patterns within the triad. In highlighting the complexity of practicum assessment, a framework is proposed for conceptualising the way in which the experience of practicum assessment is determined by the influence of multiple institutional, interpersonal and intrapersonal variables.

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Chapter One - Introduction

1.1. Overview

This thesis examines the assessment of practicum in a multi-phase study of four New Zealand institutions that provide early childhood initial teacher education. Assessment is a core act in practicum, utilised in determining the progress of the student teacher, their need for support and guidance, and ultimately, readiness to enter the teaching profession upon graduation. This thesis presents my research journey to further understand practicum as a 'complex phenomenon' (Clarke & Collins, 2007, p. 171), so that I and others may have a richer and fuller understanding of the assessment practices enacted, and the subsequent experiences of the key participants. The notion of authentic assessment is explored, reflecting my own questioning of whether commonly accepted assessment practice can offer an authentic, genuine, accurate picture of the student as a future teacher, on which reliable assessment decisions can be made.

1.2. My experiences of practicum

Smith (2007, p. 284) suggests that the assessment of practicum "has not caught the interest of teacher education researchers, although it is a topic frequently discussed around lunch tables in many teacher education contexts". This idea captures my own experience. As a teacher educator I discovered that the assessment of practicum was complex and often challenging. My work was guided by institutional policies, but individual cases raised issues and tensions that confronted both my assessment philosophy and practices. I had many ideals that were not always evidenced in the assessment experiences in which I participated. I would return to work, and discuss these issues with my colleagues over lunch, trying to find resolutions and a better way forward. These discussions were the genesis of this research.

I have experienced the assessment of practicum as a student teacher, associate teacher, teacher educator and practicum leader, and from each point of view I became aware of both strengths and challenges in the assessment process. I began my initial teacher education in 1992 as a 17 year old school leaver. I was accepted into a limited entry Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) programme. This was a three year full time programme, based on campus, offered by a College of Education in partnership with the local University. There was a significant component of practicum within this programme, culminating in a six week practicum in the final year. Memories of these practica include feelings of terror, anxiety, frustration, inspiration and delight. Many years later I can still remember being visited by my teacher educators, how anxious I was to meet expectations, the desire for affirmation, and the fear of failure. One situation was particularly significant in which my actions were misinterpreted by the teacher educator, and there was no opportunity to defend or explain myself.

Upon graduation I moved into a range of teaching positions across the early childhood sector, including public kindergarten, community kindergarten and full day education and care. When I became a fully registered teacher, I became an associate teacher for student teachers at local teacher education institutions. It was rewarding to support those in training, but these experiences resulted in my questioning whether the practices that the students were seeing were the best that they could be, and whether I could effectively explain the elements of my practice that seemed instinctual and 'taken for granted'. There was little induction to the role of associate teacher, other than written materials that came in the mail from the institution. I was initially daunted by the report writing that was required, and the understanding that my comments about a student could have such a significant impact on them both personally and professionally.

In my associate teacher role I developed on-going relationships with the teacher education providers, which in turn led to my appointment as a lecturer at a private training establishment offering the Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) and later, the Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood). After eight years as a teacher, I moved into the role of teacher educator with responsibility for visiting and assessing student teachers completing their practicum experiences. I felt a heavy weight of responsibility for making fair and accurate assessments of the practice that I observed, knowing that my assessment had significant implications for the student teacher's future career, as well as the children, families and communities that they would work with. In taking the role of teacher educator, I had anticipated that practicum visiting would be one of my favourite parts of my role, allowing me to get back in the field with teachers and children. In reality, I came to find it one of the most challenging components of my role as I dealt with the complexity of practicum, experiencing broken relationships, conflict, borderline or failing students, bias, lack of engagement, individual issues and poor teaching practices in poor quality settings. I was also concerned about whether the time I was with the student in the early childhood setting, and the assessment data that I gathered, was sufficient in order to make the high-stakes decisions I was required to make. My motivation in the assessment process was to gain a genuine, authentic picture of the student in the real world early childhood setting, but too often I felt that the student was putting on a performance, seeking to please me or the associate teacher. I also felt deep concern that students expressed such nervousness over my visit, and that my strategies to build supportive relationships and to present a friendly, collaborative approach did not necessarily counter these reactions.

At a later point, I was appointed to a leadership role within the institution, with responsibility for shaping the policy and practices in relation to practicum. This role brought greater understanding of the gate-keeping and quality assurance role of initial teacher education,

within the context of relationships with (and accountability to) external agencies such as the New Zealand Teachers Council and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. Decision making at this level led to deep consideration of the philosophical position and conceptual framework that underpins teacher education and more specifically the role of the practicum, and the place of assessment. At one point, I was charged with developing the set of criteria that would provide the assessment framework for all practicum assessment in the institution. This involved identifying the desired progression of skill from first year to third year, linking criteria to the expressed learning outcomes of the teaching content of the programme, and operationalising these criteria as observable indicators. It is now, years later, that I see more fully just how significant this task was, the implications for all involved, and I continue to reflect on the role I played and decisions I made.

Reflection has led me to believe that assessment is a highly subjective act, although it is often addressed in very pragmatic ways. I believe that there is the need for greater illumination and exploration of the issues that surround the assessment of practicum. The key participants have unique stories and experiences, that if shared, can help those who are responsible for practicum assessment to make more informed decisions in policy and practice. There are elements of assessment that are easy to discuss, but there are deeper issues that penetrate and influence the assessment experiences that are less likely to be acknowledged and critiqued. It is anticipated that this study will provide a forum for these experiences to be documented and the nature of practicum to be illuminated for the benefit of all those involved, providing guidance for future policy making and assessment innovation.

1.3. Defining key terms

1.3.1. Initial teacher education

Initial teacher education refers to programmes of study that are designed to prepare student teachers to enter the teaching profession (Kane, 2005). Such programmes are intended to provide prospective teachers with the professional knowledge and skills to support effective teaching and learning, thereby enhancing outcomes for the children that they will teach (Grudnoff & Williams, 2010). Cameron and Baker's (2004) review of initial teacher education indicated that the question of what constitutes effective initial teacher education, as well as the content, structure, design and outcomes of such programmes is the focus of considerable research, but remains contentious. Grudnoff and Williams (2010) suggest that issues associated with the quality of teacher education have been the focus of increased government scrutiny, multiple reviews, and ultimately greater bureaucratic oversight through the giving of statutory control to the New Zealand Teachers Council (hereafter referred to as NZTC) under the Education Standards Act (2001).

1.3.2. Institution

The term institution has been used throughout this study to represent accredited providers of initial teacher education. At the present time initial teacher education in New Zealand is offered by a variety of institutions including universities, private training establishments (PTE), polytechnics and community providers (Cameron & Baker, 2004). Each of these providers must be accredited by the New Zealand Teachers Council, with programme approval from the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP), or the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), in order to offer initial teacher education programmes leading to teacher registration. This study drew on a representative sample of these institutions to ensure that approaches from different types of institutions were included.

1.3.3. Practicum

For the purposes of this study the term ‘practicum’ has been chosen to represent the component of a teacher education programme in which a student teacher spends time in an educational setting for the purpose of developing their skills as a teacher, applying the knowledge gained in their course work to the everyday context of teaching and learning (Haigh & Ell, 2014; McGee, Ferrier-Kerr & Miller, 2001), as well as being apprenticed and socialised into the teaching profession (Roberts & Graham, 2008). In other writings this may also be referred to as field practice, field experience, teaching experience, centre/school-based learning, or field based experience, to name a few. One of the challenges of comparing the research in this field is that many models of practicum exist (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman & Stevens, 2009; Gough, 2008); some involve students spending short amounts of time in the educational setting, for example, one morning, or day per week. Other models have student teachers spending sustained blocks of time, from a week, a month, a semester, or even a year within the setting. As Barrie (1999) describes, practicum varies across programmes and institutions, in terms of length, structure and place in the overall programme. Practicum may be aligned with course work in different ways, running parallel to teaching content, or as dedicated blocks of time. At other times practicum is the final component of a programme, such as an internship at the completion of a qualification.

Requirements for practicum in New Zealand are specified in the *Approval, Review and Monitoring Processes and Requirements for Initial Teacher Education Programmes* (NZTC, 2010). As part of the accreditation process, initial teacher education providers must ensure that:

All practicum experiences must be planned with clear links to the rest of the programme. Practical teaching experiences must provide evidence that the student teacher has been actively supported to:

- integrate theory and practice throughout the programme.
- plan, implement, assess, evaluate and reflect on their teaching practices.
- analyse and interpret practices they observe in schools or ECE centres in relation to research, theories and other knowledge gained throughout the programme.
- reflect on their own learning and practice to develop personal and professional goals. (NZTC, 2013, p. 13)

The practicum for a student teacher is intended to operate as a partnership between the teacher education provider and a fully registered associate teacher, and the roles and responsibilities of associate teachers, the teacher education institutions and the student teacher must be made explicit in documentation.

1.3.4. The early childhood practicum

The majority of research that explores practicum in initial teacher education is situated in the compulsory education sector. There is little available research situated in early childhood settings. For the purposes of this study early childhood education is defined as education for children aged from birth to school entry. Within New Zealand, this includes a range of different services, including: state kindergarten; private kindergarten, full day care and education centres; Kohanga Reo, total immersion Māori language services; total immersion Pasifika language nests, Playcentre; Montessori and Steiner preschools, community creches and private community centres. These centres offer a variety of services, from sessional to full-time care, and range on a continuum from teacher-led to parent-led orientations (Ministry of Education, 2014). It is a requirement established by the New Zealand Teachers Council that all graduates of early childhood initial teacher education programmes will have completed practicum experiences across a range of early childhood services so that they gain an understanding of the diversity of programmes, children, families and communities involved in

early childhood education (NZTC, 2010). Many of the elements of practicum in early childhood settings are similar to those in other educational settings, with a focus on practice, professional and relational features, within the context of guidance from an experienced practitioner. While there are pedagogical, philosophical and content differences between the early childhood and compulsory schooling sectors, the intent, nature and outworking of the practicum has many similarities. Doxey (1996) affirms the commitment of the early childhood sector to the importance of practicum, suggesting that the central beliefs about play and constructing learning through experience that define contemporary early childhood practice resonate strongly with the experiential nature of practicum.

One feature that distinguishes the early childhood practicum from other educational settings is the team oriented nature of the teaching approach. Whereas in a school a typical model is often one teacher and one student teacher in a room with a group of children, within an early childhood centre there would be at least two teachers working at any one time, and depending upon the size of the centre, many more teachers may be involved. This means that the student teacher is not only exposed to the role model and influence of their associate teacher, but also that of the other teachers within the centre. This may include both qualified teachers, those who are untrained, and those currently completing their teaching qualification.

1.3.5. The triad

The practicum triad is a term used to refer to the relationship between the student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator. While much of the practicum centres on the associate teacher/student teacher dyad, the summative assessment points typically involve each member of the triad. Grudnoff and Williams (2010) suggest that the triad model has been a constant in New Zealand teacher education for many years, in which the student is placed in a variety of education settings for a specified time, allocated an associate teacher, and is then

observed and assessed by a staff member of the initial teacher education institution. Haigh and Ell (2014) note that the move to a triadic assessment model emerged from a desire to increase the fairness of assessment and empower the individual participants in their different but complementary roles.

1.3.6. Student teacher

The focus of the triadic practicum relationship is the student teacher. A triad forms around the student to support their journey into the teaching profession. Each student teacher is unique (Field, 2002); they may be a young school leaver on their first career path, or a mature student who is changing career or returning to study after raising a family. They may have no previous teaching experience, or may have been working in an education setting for a number of years. Likewise they may have had no previous study experience, or may have a range of qualifications. The practicum is seen as a critical time in the initial formation and on-going development of the student teacher's identity as a professional teacher (Cattley, 2007). Their beliefs about themselves both personally and professionally are intensely illuminated during this time. Student teachers enter the teacher education programme with an already established set of beliefs about teaching and learning, derived from their own schooling, and other educational experiences (Pajares, 1992). Part of the role of teacher education and practicum, is to encourage a process of transformation, in which existing beliefs are challenged against theory and practice (Goodfellow & Sumsion, 2000). However, this process is complex and not guaranteed (Clift & Brady, 2005). The student teacher has multiple tasks while on practicum; to show growth, to reflect, to observe, to build relationships, to link theory to practice, to demonstrate competence, amongst others. The student must engage in these tasks of practicum, aware that they are being frequently observed and assessed, and knowing that the outcome of assessment determines their progress in the programme of study, and ultimate entry into the teaching profession.

1.3.7. Associate teacher

The associate teacher is the qualified, experienced teacher within the practicum setting who has responsibility for supporting and guiding the student teacher, as well as contributing to the assessment process (Mitchell, Clarke & Nuttall, 2007); they may be referred to as mentors, cooperating teachers, supervising teachers or expert teachers. Haigh (2001) defines this role as the “subject competent, significant other and key partner for the student teacher” (p. 4). The associate teacher has responsibility for supervising, mentoring, and assessing the student during the practicum. The associate teacher role is reported to be both rewarding and challenging (Beck & Kosnik, 2000).

1.3.8. Teacher educator

The final member of the triad is the teacher educator: the representative of the institution in which the student teacher is completing their programme of study. Their role is to support and assess the practice of student teachers while on practicum (Haigh, 2001). They may be referred to variously as supervisors, visiting tutors or lecturers, and appraisers. This role may be filled by a range of people: university lecturers or tutors; teachers from the sector who are appointed to visiting/support roles; or designated assessors who may not hold another formal role in the teaching of the education programme (Cameron & Baker, 2004; Kane, 2005). The teacher educator serves as the intermediary between the student, early childhood centre and institution, and typically holds responsibility for summative assessment.

1.4. The significance of practicum and its assessment

Practicum is generally accepted to be one of the most critical components of effective teacher education programmes (Brown & Danaher, 2008; Cherian, 2007; Doxey, 1996; Goodnough, et al., 2009; Lind, 2004; Rivers, 2006). It is an integral component of all teacher education programmes offered in New Zealand (White, 2007), as mandated by the accreditation agency,

the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC, 2010). The marrying together of practice and theory is valued for helping student teachers to understand the realities of teaching whilst becoming informed by research as to best teaching practice (Clift & Brady, 2005). It is the context in which student teachers are given the opportunity to grow and develop as future members of the profession, to practice their skills and reflect on what it means to them to be a teacher (Cattley, 2007). Practicum is the forum in which student teachers are able to gain a full understanding of the daily reality of teaching practice and to see a range of educational philosophies manifest in practice (Haigh & Ell, 2014).

Student teachers consistently report that their experiences whilst on practicum are some of the most significant and influential moments in shaping their development as a teacher (Cameron & Baker, 2004). However, it cannot be assumed that simply placing student teachers in a teaching setting will in itself lead to appropriate or valuable learning experiences (Hickson, Fishburne, Berg & Saby, 2005; Hill, 1999). There are specific elements that play a significant role in determining the quality of the practicum experience. In particular, these include the nature of relationships, the provision of authentic teaching experiences, opportunities for supportive reflection and feedback and increasing opportunity for empowerment and agency.

The role of practicum within initial teacher education and the way it should be enacted has been conceptualised in different ways over time, reflecting shifting pedagogical understandings and values, as well as the competing expectations of stakeholders (Murray, Nuttall & Mitchell, 2008). A traditional model was one of apprenticeship, in which an experienced teacher socialised the prospective teacher into the accepted practices and behaviours of the profession. In such models, the primary site of learning was the classroom, and the student worked alongside the teacher until competent. In apprenticeship, the expert teacher teaches the novice, with emphasis placed on the transmission of knowledge and

expectations (John, 1996). Such models tended to reinforce existing practice, with limited space for innovation or practice of new approaches. The increasing role of the higher education institution in delivering teacher education repositioned the site of teacher education within the institution (McDonald, 2005b), with the education setting taking a limited, or non-existent role. Contemporary models, both in New Zealand and internationally, typically adopt a partnership model in which the teacher education institution and education settings work together to deliver teacher education programme, with course work delivered by the institution and practicum the domain of the education setting. The balance of delivery between the institution and education settings appears to vary between models, and continues to be a focus of on-going research and debate (Murray, Nuttall & Mitchell, 2007).

However, practicum is not only a site of learning and induction; it is the context for assessment within a teacher education environment with increasing requirements for accountability as a gatekeeper to the teaching profession. Assessment is therefore a critical component of the practicum process. Given the large body of research, both national and international, which provides substantive evidence as to the critical importance of the practicum experience within initial teacher education (Cameron & Baker, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Faire, 1994; Haigh, Pinder, & McDonald, 2006; Kane, 2005), it is important to examine the way in which the assessment of practicum assessment is both conceptualised and enacted. As conducted within a teacher education programme, assessment is a high stakes exercise (Maclellan, 2004). The outcomes of assessment have significant implications for the student teacher's subsequent career, and much time, commitment and finances are invested in their success. It is thus important to illuminate the experiences and practices of those involved in such a critical component of the teacher education programme, particularly as Brooker, Muller, Mylonas and Hansford (1998, p.18) point out that "while there is a significant body of literature concerning

practice teaching, research focused on the assessment of the practicum has been largely ignored”.

The assessment of practicum has implications for key stakeholders including the student, associate teacher and ITE institution, but also beyond, as student teachers are prospective members of the teaching community who are responsible for, and accountable to, children, families, communities and government agencies. There is a need for transparency and understanding in relation to the purpose and practice of assessment (Haigh & Ell, 2014). Studies such as those by Haigh (2001), Ortlipp (2003a, 2006) and Hawe (2002) indicate that assessment is problematic and not always fair and appropriate. “Such issues need to be addressed and resolved if the integrity of the assessment system and the qualification awarded are to be protected, and if the public is to have confidence in teacher educators as the gatekeepers to an initial teaching position” (Hawe, 2001, p. 19).

1.5. The purpose and design of the study

This research study was founded upon the contention that “we need a greater understanding of what goes on at the level of subjectivity of those who participate in practicum assessment” (Ortlipp, 2003a, p. 33). Arguably some aspects of the practicum assessment process are open to scrutiny, readily discussed and debated. There are explicit policies and practices that guide the practicum and assessment process, outlined in handbooks and course regulations. However, there are other dimensions to practicum assessment that are implicit, taken for granted, or unacknowledged. Some areas may be hidden or rarely discussed in the wider initial teacher education forum, as they deal with sensitive issues of bias, relationships, competence, subjectivity, and consistency. For this reason, this study was designed as an illuminatory and exploratory study (Punch, 2009), with the intention of answering the overarching research question; *‘how is the assessment of practicum enacted and experienced by*

key stakeholders in early childhood initial teacher education?' The study investigates the complexities of practicum and its assessment, providing a forum for the key stakeholders to share their beliefs and experiences. The present study was guided by three research objectives:

- To critically examine how a representative sample of New Zealand teacher education institutions assess early childhood practicum.
- To critically evaluate the beliefs, perceptions and experiences of the key stakeholders in the assessment of practicum.
- To identify the factors that support authentic assessment of student teachers' practice during practicum.

The theoretical framework for this study was provided by the writings of Barbara Rogoff (1984, 1998, 1995, 2003). Rogoff proposed viewing a given context through multiple lenses, or planes of analysis. She described these planes (or foci) of analysis as the cultural/institutional plane, the personal plane and interpersonal plane. While the planes are seen to be inseparable and mutually influential (Rogoff, 2003), analysis is conducted through a process of foregrounding, allowing for specific elements to be brought into sharp and critical focus, while the other planes remain present, but in the background. "The distinction between what we choose to foreground or background lies in our analysis, and is not assumed to be a separate entity in reality" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 51). Rogoff's work was a meaningful fit for this study in considering the institutional context within which practicum is conducted, the practicum assessment experiences of individual participants, and the way in which assessment was enacted within the context of the triadic relationships.

In order to address the research objectives, a multi-site, multi-phase and mixed method QUAL-
quan design (Punch, 2009) was developed in alignment with Rogoff's (2003) planes of analysis.

Four representative New Zealand institutions accredited to deliver early childhood initial teacher education participated in the study. The initial phase of the study accessed the institutional policy and practices of practicum assessment through interviews with key informants at each institution. Phase Two foregrounded the intrapersonal plane, through an online survey that accessed individual student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators and invited them to share their beliefs and experiences around the assessment process. The final phase focused on interpersonal plane, through the use of a single case study at each of the four institutions in order to gather data on the way triad members came together to enact the assessment visit.

1.6. Outline of the thesis

This study is reported in eight chapters. This current chapter has introduced the research problem, personal rationale for the study and the research aim and objectives. Chapter Two provides a critical review of the literature in relation to the assessment of practicum, considering assessment theory and practice, and the way it is enacted in the specific context of practicum. Challenges and gaps in the literature are identified in providing further rationale for the current study. Chapter Three outlines the overall methodological approach adopted, describing the epistemological beliefs that have guided the study, as well as the design decisions made.

Chapters Four, Five and Six present the results of the study, as analysed across key themes. Chapter Four foregrounds the institutional findings, examining the policies and procedures that guide the way each institution enacts practicum assessment, as described by the key informants. Chapter Five presents the findings of the online survey, in which student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators described their individual experiences of practicum assessment, foregrounding the individual findings. Chapter Six reports the four case studies,

foregrounding the way in which the triad members came together to engage in the assessment process. Each of these chapters is prefaced with a description of the sample, specific data collection and analysis methods used within each phase.

Chapter Seven addresses the research objectives, compares and contrasts the results across each phase in relation to the research objectives and identifies implications for initial teacher education. Chapter Eight identifies the contribution of the study to the field of practicum, areas for future research, and strengths and limitations of the study. A model that theorises the key influences in practicum assessment is presented, as well as a critique of current assessment practices, in which possibilities for future policy and practice directions are offered.

1.7. Summary

This chapter has introduced the notion of practicum as a complex phenomenon and identified the need for research that examines the way in which practicum assessment is enacted and experienced within the context of the early childhood practicum. Key terms have been defined, a brief justification for the study offered, and an overview of the structure of the thesis has been provided. Chapter Two, which follows, presents a review of key literature related to the way assessment is conceptualised, enacted and experienced in practicum settings.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Barrie (1999) argues that “If professional practice is to substantiate its claims as a valuable university learning experience, as opposed to a low level training exercise, it must demonstrate this through its assessment practices” (Why is this an issue: A dangerous time for 'at risk' curricula, para 4). Although practicum has been the focus of extensive research, it is suggested that the way in which assessment is enacted within the practicum has been underexplored (Brooker, Muller, Mylonas, & Hansford, 1998). This chapter presents a review of key literature on the assessment of practicum.

The review begins by defining assessment, and identifying the way assessment is conceptualised in teacher education. Criteria and performance based assessment approaches to practicum are examined as the predominant model of assessment utilised in practicum, while acknowledging the challenge of determining and applying criteria within contested understandings of what constitutes ‘good teaching’. The literature that explores the notion of authentic assessment of practicum is then reviewed, leading into an overview of specific assessment practices, and the role of feedback.

The review then examines the challenges of practicum assessment identified in the literature, including the need for validity and reliability, shared expectation and the potential for bias. A brief overview of alternative or innovative approaches to assessment of practicum is offered. The later part of the review is devoted to the literature that examines the experiences of the participants in practicum assessment, considering their role in assessment, the practices that are adopted, and the challenges that are faced, as well as the way assessment functions within the triadic relationship.

The conclusion to the literature review identifies the gaps in the existing literature and positions the current study in response to the need for research that explores the practices and experiences of participants in practicum assessment within the context of early childhood teacher education.

2.2. Search strategy

Key search terms for this review of the extant literature included practicum assessment, higher education assessment, practicum, early childhood practicum, early childhood initial teacher education, field practice/experience, teacher education, student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator. Literature was sourced using ERIC, Education Source, PsycINFO and Australia/New Zealand Reference Centre, Scopus, Google Scholar and the Massey University library catalogue and Discover search tool. Searches were repeated at regular intervals to ensure that newly published material was captured. Key websites including the New Zealand Teachers Council, Ministry of Education and Ako Aotearoa: National Centre for Tertiary Teacher Excellence were also reviewed. An automatic alert was established in 'Google Scholar' to notify of new publications in relation to the key words of 'teacher education' and 'practicum'. Reference lists of relevant articles were also a key source of new literature for consideration. A specific focus on practicum assessment in early childhood initial teacher education yielded minimal search results, very few of which were New Zealand sources. This necessitated a wider search of literature related to assessment of practicum in other education settings, as well as more general literature related to practicum and teacher education which served to provide contextualisation. The literature related to the broader topic of practicum is extensive, reflecting the importance of practicum in initial teacher education. This breadth of literature required careful evaluation to determine the material that was most relevant to assessment of practicum.

2.3. Defining assessment

In developing the foundation for this study, it is important to define what is meant by the term *assessment*, and the way in which assessment is defined in the context of teacher education.

Different paradigmatic lenses shape the way assessment is defined and applied in context.

Traditional views of assessment adopted a measurement oriented, or psychometric approach, which emphasised objective, reliable measurement of individual ability (McLachlan, Fleer & Edwards, 2013). Measurement models view knowledge as object and context-free, and typically focus on assessment tasks that have definitive answers, and are apart from the practice situation (Joughin, 2009). In contrast, from a social-cultural position, drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) theory, assessment is viewed as a cultural practice that is defined within academic and professional disciplines (Boud, 2009). The following definition offered by Joughin (2009, p.16) is particularly useful: "To assess is to make judgements about students' work, inferring from this what they have the capacity to do in the assessed domain, and thus what they know, value, or are capable of doing". This definition appears to offer goodness of fit with the assessment of practicum, whereby the associate teacher and teacher educator make professional judgements about the current knowledge, skills and practices of the student teacher, and draw inferences as to their potential teaching practices as a graduate entering the profession (Haigh & Ell, 2014). Such qualitative and contextualised approaches to assessment do not claim to be objective, and focus on authenticity and trustworthiness as measures of reliability and validity (McLachlan, Fleer & Edwards, 2013).

Assessment, as it is typically enacted in initial teacher education, serves a dual role with both formative and summative purposes (Tillema, Smith & Lesham, 2011). Joughin (2009) refers to these as learning and judgement functions, and identifies the challenge of balancing these different purposes. Formative and summative assessment practices may be similar; however they are differentiated by the core intent and purpose of the assessment. Formative

assessment has been defined as assessment *for* learning, typically enacted during the learning situation, while summative assessment is defined as assessment *of* learning, typically at the end of an experience (McLachlan, Fleer & Edwards, 2013; Watson & Robbins, 2008), although such categorisations may be somewhat simplistic. Smith (2007) argues that much of the confusion related to the assessment of practicum arises as a result of trying to balance assessment functions that at times appear contradictory.

Pullman (1995) argues that if formative assessment is conducted in a detailed, comprehensive manner, then it will form a strong evidential framework for the writing of the final summative practicum report. However, it should not be assumed that formative assessment has occurred as an automatic outcome of a mentoring relationship. Formative assessment should be thoroughly documented to provide a clear picture of the way in which the student teacher has developed over time, and the way in which they have meaningfully responded to the feedback they have been given and their own reflection and self-evaluation.

Summative assessment is typically aligned with the grading processes of the institution, and has implications for the students' progress through or completion of a course of study (Ciuffetelli-Parker & Volante, 2009; Maclellan, 2004). Grading takes the raw assessment data, aggregates the different assessment points and converts results to the measurement system of the institution, for example pass/fail. Boud (2009) suggests that formative purposes of assessment are gaining in emphasis, but are still often subordinated to the summative purposes required of qualification standards.

Current conceptualisations of assessment show a shift from traditional norm-referenced, measurement-oriented approaches (Delandshere & Petrosky, 1998) towards viewing assessment as embedded with the socio-cultural framework of learning and teaching. Such a

shift in perspective positions assessment as a qualitative act, acknowledging subjectivity, and allowing for the role and influence of the assessor (Jönsson & Mattsson, 2011). Ortlipp (2003b, p. 236) argues that “perhaps practicum assessment and how it is practiced is really about the subjectivities of the participants involved and how they want to be seen and see themselves, how they are positioned and position themselves within the discourses that circulate in and around the early childhood practicum”. Assessment is thus no longer seen as static and fixed, but rather as occurring within shifting social constructs (Turnbull, 1999). Designers of practicum assessment tasks must ensure that assessment practices allow for complexity and that assessment judgements consider the context in which assessment takes place (Haigh & Ell, 2014).

Joughin (2009) identifies the multiple functions of assessment in higher education settings, and suggests that there are three that predominate: “supporting the process of learning; judging students’ achievement in relation to course requirements; and maintaining the standards of the profession” (p. 1). All three of these functions are critical in the assessment of practicum as teacher education providers and other stakeholders face the critical question: “what type of evidence is needed to safely say that an aspiring teacher has not only grasped the essential notions and concepts from the teacher education course, but is also able to implement them in real world classroom situations?” (Bannink, 2009, p. 244).

Joughin (2009) suggests that assessment in higher education settings, such as initial teacher education, is an exercise in professional judgement. Although both external standards and institutional criteria may be in place, the assessment process relies heavily on the decision making of the teacher educator and associate teacher to determine whether required outcomes have been met, and to what quality (Smith, 2007). Hawe (2002) notes that practicum in New Zealand relies heavily on the act of professional judgement within a

standards and criterion-oriented approach, and notes concern regarding the potential fallibility of such judgements. Within an assessment culture that privileges professional autonomy “factors such as intuition, personal feelings, experience, knowledge of the subject and cumulative knowledge of the particular student were acknowledged as key elements of professional judgement” (Hawe, 2002, p. 98). Sadler (2005) argues that the reliance on professional judgements “is both normal and inescapable, but by no means poses an intractable problem... the situation needs to be understood and managed rather than deplored” (p. 189). Haigh and Ell (2014) suggest that instinctive judgments may lead to confusion for the student teacher when they are not aware of the reasons for the assessor’s decisions, highlighting the need for greater transparency. The dilemmas raised by the use of professional judgments are typically addressed by processes of internal and external moderation (Adie, Lloyd & Beutal, 2013), within which professional judgments are subject to critique (Coll, Taylor & Grainger, 2002).

Assessment in higher education, such as initial teacher education, is a high stakes enterprise (Maclellan, 2004) with critical consequences. For the student teacher assessment outcomes have a direct impact on their progress through the programme of study and subsequent entry into the teaching profession (Hegender, 2010). For institutions, a political climate of increased accountability and greater demand for outcomes-based evidence of programme efficacy means that continued public funding may depend on assessment outcomes (Zepke & Leach, 2006). The need for assessment approaches that support the learning of the student teacher, as well as providing information as to the quality of the student’s practice, has seen the emergence of criteria-based and performance based assessment in teacher education, as outlined in the following section.

2.4. Criteria-based, performance, or competency-based assessment

The assessment of practicum requires alternative approaches to traditional norm-referenced testing, in which “predetermined levels of standards of performance become the basis for comparison in order to provide explicit information as to what students can and cannot do” (Maclellan, 2004, p. 317). While standardized testing has been the dominant model in higher education, such measures are less appropriate for assessment in professional contexts, such as practicum in teacher education. Alternative assessment models may be identified as criteria-based, performance-based, or competency-based, but all are centred around the principle that assessment measures are made by comparing the practice of the student to pre-determined criteria. Criteria are the expressed attributes, indicators or rules that are established to guide judgement and assessment decision making (Sadler, 2005). Messick (1994) argues that these assessment approaches are becoming increasingly popular as they offer the opportunity for authentic and direct assessment of practice. Criteria-based approaches to assessment have been widely accepted in professional domains, for the potential to directly examine practice in meaningful and context relevant settings, such as practicum. Brown (2008) argues that a criteria-based approach to assessment “allows assessment to be more focused; is more equitable; clarifies expectations for all stakeholders; ascribes expectations for the developmental progression of teaching practice; allocates responsibilities; prompts useful, supportive and focussed feedback; and provides a framework for self-assessment” (p. 97).

The shift towards competency- and performance-based assessment must be seen within the social and political climate. As Harrison states, “teaching and teacher education have become political enterprises both value-laden and socially constructed” (2007, p. 324). Haigh, Ell and Mackisack (2013) acknowledge that the development of teaching competencies and standards is a world-wide phenomenon, embedded in a much wider socio-economic-political context. Performance-based assessment is often required within a market economy that seeks proven

outcomes to justify the expenditure of the education dollar and reassurance that there is a return from the investment in teacher education (Cameron & Baker, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 2005).

Stakeholders associated with professional programmes want reassurance as to the quality of practice demonstrated, acknowledging that not all graduates of a specific programme will demonstrate uniform qualities that will ensure success in their role as a teacher; “accountability in the preparation of teachers is a topic of great concern to all stakeholders in the process” (Autry, Lee & Fox, 2009, p. 141). Traditionally, completion of a recognised teacher education programme was seen as sufficient evidence of teaching competency and readiness for the profession. Competency was judged on the basis of accredited programme content – the inputs of the institution. There is now a shift towards performance, or competency based approaches (Tinning, 2000), in which the evaluation is made on the student teacher’s ability to demonstrate specific skills or competencies in authentic settings (Adams & Wolf, 2008) – an outputs oriented approach.

Brown (2008) reported an evaluation of a criterion-based assessment rubric for practicum at the University of Tasmania. Participants, including 30 student teachers and 40 associate teachers across early childhood, primary and secondary schools, were very supportive and positive regarding the introduction of the rubric, and the rubric was seen as a valuable tool for providing both formative and summative assessment information. Of note was that both associate teachers and teacher educators found that having defined expectations and standards for the practicum was most valuable when the student teacher was *not* meeting them, and was thereby at risk of failing the practicum. Brown (2008) argues these standards were helpful in being able to identify and articulate the areas requiring further development, and made the feedback less personal and therefore easier to deliver. Having clear

expectations, as expressed in the rubric, was also seen to support student teachers in giving them a road map for their future development. This view suggests that professional growth is developmental in nature, with progressive steps of competence to be attained, building upon previous skills. The developmental nature of student development was highlighted in Field's (2002) study in Canada, in which eight teacher educators participated in a focus group and ninety student teachers completed a survey. Findings indicated that teacher educators and student teachers saw the practicum as progressive over the duration of the programme, with students in the latter part of the qualification demonstrating greater self-confidence and self-evaluation, with greater attention to the learning of the children, rather than their own needs.

Veal and Rikard (1998, p. 21), in trialling performance assessment in the teaching context of secondary physical education teachers observed that:

When assessors were asked to write an interpretive summary of a performance, they took more notes in viewing and reading it and used those notes as a basis for their interpretation. When the focus was on rating, however, they tended to look for features of the performance that were similar to or different from the general description contained in the rubrics, and they decided on the ratings very early on, often before they had viewed or read the entire performance.

This finding alerts teacher education providers to the importance of allowing more open interpretation of teaching practices, rather than a narrow focus on predefined characteristics. However, this calls to attention issues of consistency, observer bias, reliability and validity. These tensions are complex and not easily resolved. For performance- or competence-based assessment to be valid it must be informed and guided by the body of research that identifies effective teaching practices, and reflect the mission of the educational institution (Pullman, 1995).

Competency-based assessment, while purporting to be a more authentic and reliable form of evaluating teaching practice (Jönsson & Mattsson, 2011) is not without its critics. The greatest challenge of criteria-based assessment in teacher education is the contention that teaching is complex and problematic (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000), and “what constitutes practice is not self-evident” (Boud, 2009, p. 30). Practices associated with academic and professional disciplines are both socially and culturally constructed, defined and contested, and often lack transparency and clear articulation to participants (Haigh & Ell, 2014). To pose the question, ‘what makes a good early childhood teacher?’ yields a multiplicity of stakeholder viewpoints. It further raises numerous issues: in what context? For which children? To meet which needs? Practice becomes meaningful within the specific context in which it is enacted, requiring assessment practices that can attend to the specific nature and context of a given situation, over and above a generalised set of specified actions, or a focus on technical competence (Watson & Robbins, 2008). Those who determine the criteria also face the dilemma that for every competence included there will be another that could be argued is just as critical, and stakeholders may have competing agendas.

Critics of competency based assessment are concerned about the potential of prescribed standards to reduce the complexity of teaching practice to a set of ‘tick the box’ behaviours (Bannink, 2009; Harrison, 2007) and mask the subtleties of teaching. Coll, Taylor and Grainger (2002, p. 5) argue strongly against the inappropriate application of science-oriented methods which “contribute to the development of assessment measures, which insist on measurable outcomes and technical competencies, devaluing the wisdom, intuition or artistry of practice”. An assessment approach that shifts from technical skills to the deeper, more complex aspects of teaching requires critical evaluation of the factors considered in assessing competence. In the quest for more authentic assessment data, assessment measures are widened to consider concepts of teaching qualities, responsive practice, attitudes, attributes and dispositions of

effective teachers. However, reaching consensus on a fixed set of demonstrable actions that exemplify desired teaching practices becomes very challenging within a dynamic context of relational, cultural, social and political influences. Outcomes in such a context become negotiable and contested, and criteria can be subject to change as a result of shifting political policy and externally guided criteria (Coll, Taylor & Grainger, 2002), such as the New Zealand Teachers Council Graduating Teacher Standards (NZTC, 2007).

Criterion-based assessment also calls into question the reliability of assessor ratings. Veal and Rikard (1998, p. 21) argue that “the danger exists that the assessors will attend to the most visible or superficial characteristics of the performance while neglecting the specific patterns and connections that give it meaning and integrity”. Coll, Taylor and Grainger (2002) further argue that assessors need to be aware of attending more to areas of technical competence, rather than higher level teaching skills and understanding.

Adams and Wolf (2008) report on a five year evaluation of the implementation of a performance based approach in the early childhood education programme at the University of Colorado - Denver. They state that the move to performance based assessments significantly increased the information that they were able to gather about the skills and competencies of student teachers, but also acknowledge that they “required more time and effort on the part of the university practicum supervisors, site supervisors and the teacher candidates themselves” (Adams & Wolf, 2008, p. 17). Whilst those responsible for assessment may want to see more authentic practices followed, this requires scope to be made within their workload, as well as the financial commitment of the institution to allow more time to spend with the student teacher (White, 2009), as well as opportunities for induction, professional development and moderation. Ingvarson (2005, p. 10) states that “current levels of funding for teacher education do not make it easy for university staff to provide feedback to students

about their developing practice” and yet we know that feedback based on authentic assessment is a critical component of effective teacher education. Veal and Rikard (1998, p. 16) also explain that “clearly articulating and documenting the evidence that underlies [assessment] decisions is expensive”.

2.5. Beliefs about ‘good teaching’

At the heart of the assessment of practicum lies the question ‘what is good teaching?’ (Smith, 2007, p. 282). One of the most significant challenges facing criterion- and performance-oriented assessment is the decision around who is responsible for determining the standards and criteria for acceptable or quality practice within the field (Sadler, 2005). In New Zealand at this time, the standards are established by the New Zealand Teachers Council, expressed as the Graduating Teacher Standards (NZTC, 2007). The introduction to these standards states that:

From 2008, teacher education institutions will provide evidence to the Council, and to our partner quality assurance agency, that will give confidence and assurance that the Graduating Teacher Standards will have been met by all graduates... In addition, no teacher should graduate from an approved teacher education programme without having shown they meet the Learning Outcomes of practica. (NZTC, 2007, p. 2)

While providing a framework, these standards must then be translated and operationalized at both an institutional and practicum case level.

Accrediting agencies and institutions in many countries have developed specific standards for teacher education programmes, typically related to the competencies that are expected for graduates of the programme (Haigh & Tuck, 1999; Harrison, 2007). For example, Adams and Wolf (2008) state that in 2000 the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education

(NCATE, USA) “mandated the use of performance based assessments to provide evidence that teacher candidates have mastered the content knowledge in their fields and to demonstrate that they can teach it effectively” (p. 7). Autry, Lee and Fox (2009) at the University of Texas – Arlington, describe an assessment protocol that is making use of contemporary technologies to support student teachers to present multiple evidences of their achievement across their training. The expectations for this assessment are derived from state standards and are then interpreted by the faculty into observable statements of teacher performance (Autry, Lee & Fox, 2009). However debate remains (Cochran-Smith, 2001; Grudnoff, Hawe & Tuck, 2005) as to how standards should be determined in the context of competing beliefs about teaching, as well as whether standards are an effective means of ensuring quality practice, given the scope for interpretation at the level of the practicum.

While formal standards represent a set of beliefs about teaching for a given community or group, the way in which the individual participants in practicum define their understanding of what constitutes ‘good teaching’ is also very significant in shaping assessment decision making. The literature related to teacher beliefs is helpful in understanding the influences on the way in which individual assessors may respond to practicum assessment. Pajares (1992) argues that teacher beliefs are a messy construct, and that when under pressure teachers will revert to implicit fundamental beliefs. Genishi (1992) highlights the role of ‘theories of practice’, core fundamental beliefs about teaching and learning that shape the individual practice of teachers. Spodek (1988) states that teachers consistently process information from observing what takes place prior to, during and after their decision making, critiquing this against their prior experiences, educational knowledge and beliefs, which shapes their reality of what is considered to be good teaching in a given situation. Foucault (1977) highlighted that beliefs can become ingrained as discourse, establishing ‘regimes of truth’ that are difficult to break into, even when challenged by another truth. Teacher educators, associate teachers and student

teachers will bring a complex set of beliefs about teaching to the assessment process, which Carr and Kemmis (1983) argue are determined by past experience, and socially constructed and embedded. These implicit theories may or may not align with the other participants, causing tension in an act that typically seeks consensus between participants (Haigh & Ell, 2014).

2.6. Authentic assessment

Watson and Robbins (2008, p. 318) define authentic assessment as follows: “authenticity is concerned with the genuineness of an assessment process in making judgements about performance”. Initial teacher education is therefore tasked with supporting students in their professional growth and movement into the teaching profession, but also with making judgements about the quality of their demonstrated practice (Tillema, Smith & Lesham, 2011).

Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000, p. 524) report that:

An expanding number of teacher education programmes are using authentic assessments of teaching as one set of tools to help novice teachers create, in a principled fashion, bridges from generalisations about practice to apparently idiosyncratic, contextualised instances of learning... [including] opportunities for developing and examining teachers’ thinking and actions in situations that are experience based and problem oriented.

They state that one of the current interests of educators is to develop forms of assessment that fill the dual role of providing authentic information that reflects the complexity of the teaching role, while also helping teachers to improve the quality of their practice. One interesting outcome of Darling-Hammond and Snyder’s (2000) report was that assessment data not only provided information about individual students, but also helped to illuminate the

quality and characteristics of the initial teacher education programme themselves, supporting development and improvement within the institutions.

Iverson, Lewis and Talbot (2008) conducted a synthesis of key literature in relation to authentic assessment and present a rating framework to guide institutions in ensuring that the assessment tasks that they develop (including those completed on practicum experiences) comply with the principles of authentic assessment. They propose that the following five criteria be considered in evaluating the authenticity of an assessment task:

1. Be routinely performed by professional teachers.
2. Involve students in the classroom.
3. Promote knowledge of the practice of teaching.
4. Prompt for self-reflection; and
5. Serve a formative purpose (Iverson et al., 2008, p.293).

One of the notable features of authentic assessment is the acknowledged need for more than one measure of assessment to provide a fuller picture of the skills and competence of the student. In the context of teacher education this has been translated in a number of ways. At times this is achieved through assessing over time and in different situations. Alternatively it may involve gathering assessment data from more than one person involved in the teaching situation (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000). One argument proposed for the efficacy of triadic models of practicum assessment is that there is more than one person involved, with the student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator all contributing to the assessment. The teacher educator is often only in the setting with the student teacher for a short period of time during the practicum, and therefore is not able to exhaustively assess all elements of the student's practice (Coll, Taylor & Grainger, 2002). Given the small snapshot of practice that the teacher educator is able to observe, the role of the associate teacher is

critical in fleshing out more assessment information to gain a bigger picture of the student's practice. However, it must be acknowledged that there is the potential for conflict between the perspectives of different assessors (Kersh, 1995), with associate teachers and teacher educators having both different experiences, skills and expectations. In seeking the reliability of assessment practices, it is hoped that there would be a high level of agreement between the three members involved; however, this is often not the case. As Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000) explain "two people looking at the same evidence base might draw entirely different conclusions about its meaning if they have different levels or kinds of expertise, or if they are applying different expectations for what constitutes a good or competent performance" (p. 528).

In considering the importance of multiple perspectives, early childhood education provides an interesting case. The typical assessment model incorporates the perspective of the associate teacher, but what of the feedback from other teachers who work closely with the student teacher? The team oriented nature of early childhood education means that several teachers may serve in the mentoring or guidance role, and the associate teacher may not be the colleague who works most closely with the student teacher 'on the floor'. Student teachers are likely to be engaging in the co-production of practice with multiple teachers in an early childhood setting. Bradbury and Koballa (2008) acknowledge this, arguing there are many people who influence a student teacher's learning while on practicum, and that more research should be conducted about the influence of multiple mentors. There also appears to be little acknowledgement that children and their families are potentially the most vulnerable of practicum stakeholder groups, yet their voice would not commonly be heard within the assessment framework. Dayan (2008) conducted a study in which the opinions of 35 young children within an early childhood setting were included as a component of the overall assessment of a student teacher. He asked the children two questions "*what does (name of*

student teacher) need to learn so that she can be a teacher?” and “how should she learn it?” (p. 165). He found that the children were more observant and attentive to the student teacher than expected, and that they felt some responsibility in the ‘training’ of the student. He concludes by suggesting the need for further consideration of the way children may contribute to the assessment picture.

Whilst the notion of authentic assessment often resonates well with the philosophy of teacher education and accepted education practice, there are still a number of factors which serve to hinder the full application of authentic assessment in practice. Predominantly, the factors they are institutional in nature; the restrictions of time, finance and resistance to change. Effective assessment practices require investment of time for induction, training and ongoing support (Grudnoff & Williams, 2010). Financial and workload limitations impact on the ability of institutions to provide professional development in a meaningful and effective way. For example, studies examining the development of associate teachers quite consistently show that workload issues effect their attendance at courses/training (Brown, 2008) and that involvement is more likely when they are given release time from their teaching during the day. This is an expensive option as the educational setting must usually bear the cost of employing a relief teacher to fill this role. Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000) state that for authentic assessment to be cost-effective and sustainable, it must be embedded within the programme, not seen as an add-on or extra, and must be developed through the combined efforts and commitment of all participants. Policies must be implemented that encourage collaboration and contribution, allowing time and space for dialogue, reflection and growth (White, 2009).

2.7. Assessment practices

There is little research evidence in the literature to indicate the specific practices that are adopted by assessors in gathering assessment information about students on practicum. Haigh and Ell (2014) note that while there are governing standards for practicum, there are no specified guidelines for how assessment should be enacted in practice. Observation appears to be a key assessment tool (Power & Perry, 2002), but in many studies the role of observation appears to be a taken for granted practice, with little description or quantification of the observation process. Little attention is given to the different ways in which associate teachers and teacher educators may approach assessment practices within their roles.

Dayan (2008) reports on a study conducted in 1999 in which he analysed the actions of six teacher educators when visiting students in an early childhood centre in Israel. This study is significant as it is one of the few that is conducted within the context of the early childhood practicum, and also to identify specific practices enacted by teacher educators in the assessment visit. He found that the visit tended to be defined by three key phases: arriving and walking around the setting; observation of the student teacher's actual teaching practice; and the supervisory conference (triadic meeting). Analyses of these phases suggested that teacher educators tended to adopt one of three foci in their interactions and feedback. An *activity-oriented* assessor tended to focus on the activities that the student teacher engaged in and provided feedback on technical elements that were observed. A *child-oriented* assessor framed their assessment in response to the way the student teacher identified and responded to children's learning. The *student-oriented* assessor placed the student teacher at the centre of the assessment, with a focus on their personal qualities and professional growth. These categorisations help to shed light on the way in which different teacher educators conceptualise and enact their role as they engage in the assessment process. Dayan (2008) did not propose that any approach was more effective than another, but suggested that teacher

educators should reflect on and evaluate their approach to determine their pedagogy, particularly early in their career.

Assessment that focuses on growth requires effective feedback. Many authors refer in passing to the critical importance of feedback, and yet often fail to define the nature and form of feedback that is most effective. Joughin (2009, p. 2) defines feedback as:

...a process of identifying gaps between actual and desired performance, noting ways of bridging those gaps, and then having students take action to bridge those gaps. Feedback thus conceived is a moderately complex process of learning which is often difficult to enact to the satisfaction of students or teachers.

Cattley (2007) argues that the nature of feedback given within the practicum situation is critical in shaping the self-efficacy beliefs of the student teacher, and in turn their sense of self and professional identity. Given the emotional investment that student teachers have in the outcomes of the practicum and its assessment, Cattley (2007) warns against an over use of negative feedback, which could be destructive to emerging identity development. Copland (2010) argues that student teachers need to be actively and explicitly prepared to engage appropriately in the feedback process. If given guidance, support and practice, student teachers, and others involved in the triadic conference can engage with feedback in a more open, appropriate and considered manner, with the intent of enhancing the outcomes for all involved.

Randall and Thornton (2001) describe the way in which Heron's (1990) Six Category Intervention Analysis can be applied to feedback that supports the development of teachers. Heron's framework divides feedback into two broad categories - Authoritative and Facilitative - which are further explicated in six specific 'intervention' types (prescriptive, informative, confronting, cathartic, catalytic and supportive) that may be apparent in feedback sessions

such as the triadic assessment meeting. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the categories as defined and operationalised by Randall and Thornton (2001). The categories of feedback reflect the types of feedback that may be offered to student teachers by either teacher educators or associate teachers during the practicum and the formal triadic assessment meeting.

Table 2.1
Heron's Six Category Intervention Analysis

Authoritative	Facilitative
Prescriptive Refers to interventions in which the advisor tries to directly tell the teacher what they should do, how to improve or modify the way they teach.	Cathartic This type of intervention seeks to allow a teacher to discharge their emotions and feelings, particularly painful feelings of grief, fear and anger.
Informative The advisor gives the teacher information or knowledge about the situation on which to base a new awareness and to facilitate personal growth.	Catalytic This type of intervention from the advisor encourages self-discovery by the teacher by questioning on critical areas and by bringing knowledge and information to the surface
Confronting The advisor tries to raise the teacher's consciousness about certain aspects of teaching by sharing perceptions of the teacher's behaviour and challenging the teacher on areas which are seen as problematic and through this confrontation to improve their teaching skills.	Supportive In a supportive intervention the advisor affirms the worth of the teacher, primarily by praising and valuing what has been done.

Note. Adapted from Randall, M. & Thornton, B. (2001). *Advising and supporting teachers*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000) propose that the process of feedback and reflection should not be a static and finite process, but rather used as a tool within multiple opportunities for the student teacher to practice, and thereby develop competence. Feedback should guide the student teacher in the opportunity to try again (Kahu, 2008), so that it facilitates assessment for learning. The opportunity to try again yields further assessment data

as to the student teacher's ability to learn from practice. This may be difficult if feedback and assessment is only given at the end of the practicum and the student teacher does not have the opportunity for immediate implementation. As Kahu (2008, p. 193) suggests "this lack of immediate opportunity to apply feedback can result in students simply reading the comments at the time and then not referring to them again, resulting in no improvement or learning".

White (2009) conducted a multi-phase action research project with several cohorts of teacher educators (four in Phase Two, six in Phase Three) and student teachers (35 across Phases One, Four and Five) in a New Zealand primary initial teacher education programme, which examined the use of an explicit model to guide the feedback process during practicum. Teacher educators were encouraged to be more focused in the questions that they asked, in order to stimulate meaningful discussion and then to offer explicit guidance on teaching practice and support for the student teacher to set specific goals. These goals were revisited with the student teacher either on a second visit during the practicum or in a debriefing session following the practicum. The feedback and reflection cycle then began again to support ongoing professional growth, either for future practicum or in moving into the profession. Findings indicate that three variables were critical in the relative effectiveness of the feedback: time, honesty and lecturer availability.

Kahu (2008) summarises key findings on feedback and its role in evaluation, motivation and learning, identifying the following characteristics as critical in the appropriate use of feedback:

Feedback increases motivation if it is: clear, frequent and conveys developing competence; avoids subtly conveying perceptions of low ability such as praising for easy tasks; focuses on mastery rather than norms; emphasises effort and learning rather than being correct; and treats mistakes as normal (Kahu, 2008, p. 189).

This is an interesting issue for the early childhood practicum experience where there is arguably little scope for mistake making, given the age and potential vulnerability of the children concerned. Potentially a more authentic picture of the student as a teacher would be elicited if the student teacher did not feel that they had to be on their 'best behaviour' at all times. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) argue that feedback should support student teachers to become more skilled in and committed to self-assessment and self-regulation by clarifying good performance, facilitating the development of reflection, encouraging discussion, encouraging positive self-esteem, giving opportunities to demonstrate improvement, and providing information that can be used to shape future teaching.

The challenge remains, however, that a student teacher may appreciate the feedback, but not actually use it make changes to future practice. Joughin (2009, p. 24) takes a strong position, arguing that:

Clearly, assertions about the importance of feedback to learning stand in contrast to the findings of empirical research into students' experience of assessment, raising questions regarding both the theoretical assumptions about the centrality of feedback to learning and the frequent failure to bring feedback effectively into play as part of the teaching and learning process.

One of the challenges of a triadic approach is that reflection and feedback are brought into a more public forum. Copland (2010) conducted an ethnographic study of 16 students and four trainers in a certificate level teacher training course in the United Kingdom. She found that tension emerged not only from the power relationships within the triad, but also from the necessity of sharing reflection and feedback so openly. She found that group feedback was a complex event that required specific skills and not all participants were confident and competent to engage fully in the process. She also found personality traits and dispositions

were influential factors in determining the willingness of students to contribute and the effectiveness of the information shared.

Rorrison (2010) worked with colleagues in a Swedish-Australian network to research practicum learning, developing a series of principles to guide best practice in practicum. In summarising her findings, Rorrison (2010, p. 516) applied the developed principles to the assessment act and called for the following practices:

- Clearer conceptualisation of the theories and pedagogies that guide teachers, carefully scaffolded for the student teacher;
- greater shared understanding between the institutions and the triad members to enhance transparency;
- a more flexible view of prospective teachers, allowing space for individual learning needs and development;
- acknowledgement of contextual differences in the practicum; and
- fostering supportive, humane mentoring that moves from discourses of ‘failure’ that are a result of inequitable expectations.

Rorrison (2010, p. 516) argues that such shifts in practice at the institutional and teacher educator level will bring about a “practicum turn, where practicum is viewed not as a testing ground but as a learning experience... of great benefit to future teachers providing it is carefully designed and the learning not left to chance”. In advocating for a shift in practice, Rorrison (2010) acknowledges that current practices are problematic. The following section explores the challenges frequently reported in practicum literature.

2.8. Challenges of practicum assessment

Despite the extensive interest and research investment in practicum, the assessment of practicum remains problematic, particularly in the areas of purpose, context, standard setting

and enforcement, shared expectations and role division (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Haigh & Tuck, 1999). This section will address the following critical issues: accountability vs. support, reliability and validity, bias, consistency and fairness, shared expectations, and students who are not succeeding.

2.8.1. The purpose of assessment: accountability vs. support

One of the challenges that teacher education providers face is the tension that exists between assessment for learning, with a focus on learner support, and the need for assessment of learning within a political climate that requires accountability and gatekeeping (Bates, 2004; McDonald, 2005b). As Maclellan, (2004, p. 313) argues, “however much we might want to be primarily concerned with the diagnosis and support of student learning, the reality is that assessment in higher education is not confined to instructional improvement”.

International literature indicates that the quest for accountability is increasing. As Autry, Lee and Fox (2009, p. 138) suggest, “outside pressure to hold colleges of education accountable for improved performance on teacher education programmes continues to be intense”. Teacher education providers now face a situation in which they must not only demonstrate the quality of their programmes, but also provide evidence as to the effects of the programme on the student teacher and the children that they subsequently teach (Barrie, 1999; Cochran-Smith, 2005, 2006). In the study by Autry et al. (2009) at University of Texas - Arlington College of Education, faculty conducted a qualitative pre- and post- testing of 149 student teachers to determine if there was a positive effect from the programme of study. They found a statistically significant positive outcome, indicating that practicum experiences and course work do yield improved knowledge and practice. Pre and post scores were also found to be valuable to the institution in identifying areas for programme development and improvement.

Ciuffetelli-Parker and Volante (2009), teacher educators in Canada, describe a self-study in which over the course of an academic year they engaged together in reflection and evaluation of the way in which they assessed student teachers on practicum. The focus of their study related to reconciling the challenges of providing formative feedback to student teachers within a summative assessment framework; a checklist. The authors express their increasing discomfort throughout the year, and their increased advocacy within the institution for assessment approaches that allowed greater scope for the teacher educators to provide formative feedback to student teachers in meaningful ways. The authors query if there can be authentic assessment of the student teacher if the ultimate purpose is accountability? In New Zealand, Keesing-Styles (2003) similarly acknowledged the challenges arising from seeking to implement collaborative assessment practices within a culture of accountability. As she suggests:

...no matter how much we want to take a critical approach to assessment, it must still be acknowledged that the current environment requires particular standards being met, and it is up to the lecturers to ensure that happens. However, there are ways in which the process can be adapted to offer some alternatives where the students are much more active and increase their ownership. (2003, Student Generated Assessment Tasks, para 2)

Chung (2008) conducted a case study of two student teachers involved in a pilot study of a practicum performance assessment protocol in the USA. She notes an unexpected finding of the study related to the fact that one of the students (Tracy), was involved in the course as a required component of her teacher education programme and would therefore have her work contribute to the final assessment of the course, while the other (Joy), voluntarily participated in the course for her own growth, with the assessment serving only to inform her own practice. Chung questions whether Joy would have been so open in acknowledging the

weaknesses she perceived in her teaching, if she had felt that her final grade was influenced by this. On the other hand, Tracy achieved significantly higher grades than Joy, perhaps because she was more motivated by the grade allocation:

This raises the question of how an assessment's purpose interacts with its uses in influencing teacher learning associated with the experience of completing the assignment... does Joy's teaching event present a more authentic representation of her teaching than Tracy's teaching event because no real stakes were attached? (Chung, 2008, p. 20)

While there is often theoretical agreement as to the importance of equal and reciprocal relationships in the practicum, achieving this outcome in practice can be very difficult. Lomas (1999) goes so far as to suggest that it is almost impossible due to the 'evaluation bind,' "created by assessment requirements on the supervisor and supervisee which acts against the establishment of a climate of openness and trust to necessary for an effective professional development focus" (p. 24). This argument is also presented by Tillema, Smith and Lesham (2011), who question whether those who are responsible for mentoring and supporting a student on practicum can also take a role in summative assessment without jeopardising the open relationship required.

2.8.2. Reliability and validity

Crooks, Kane and Cohen (1996) argue that the validity of any assessment is its most important quality. Validity speaks to whether the assessment is a good measure of the characteristics it is intended to assess. It is to enhance the validity of assessment that student teachers are typically observed in the actual teaching setting, rather than in a test, essay or artificial situation (Johnson, 2013). However, the notion of validity is problematic in practicum assessment, in that it requires agreement of what constitutes good teaching practice (Haigh &

Ell, 2014), and some judgement around the quality of what is agreed to be a very complex act (Smith, 2007). Given that determinations of 'good teaching' are contextually bound and socially determined (Cameron & Baker, 2004; Rorrison, 2010), agreement between stakeholders can be elusive.

Reliability is generally agreed to be quantification of consistency in assessment (Moss, 1994). Less standardised forms of assessment, such as those seen in practicum assessment, raise significant issues in relation to reliability, as there is often substantial latitude in the way criteria may be evidenced and interpreted. Clearly established criteria are argued to be the resolution to reliability issues in assessment, but Maclellan (2004, p. 317) argues that this is a naïve position that fails to acknowledge that criteria are subject to the interpretation of the assessor, as evidenced in the need for induction, training and moderation:

Because the whole point of alternative assessment is not to award a single score or percentile rank, but to judge a multi-faceted accomplishment, the issue of human judgement becomes significant. And since human judgment about any particular event can differ, dramatically, both within persons across time and amongst persons, the reliability of alternative assessment is a serious issue.

Reliability is further hampered by the challenge of determining optimal assessment criteria and responding to the complexity of practicum situations (Williams, 2008).

Coll, Taylor and Grainger (2002) suggest that validity and reliability may at times be at odds with each other in the assessment of practicum. Criteria that determine very specific, technicist elements may serve to increase the reliability of assessments between assessors, but may be at the expense of assessing what is considered important in the teaching act. Veal and Rikard (1998) examined the assessment process with a group of 23 qualified physical education teachers in the USA, who were seeking further certification in advanced teaching

skills. They utilised videos, portfolios and reflective writing, which were assessed by a group of 'judges' in order to create evaluative statements. However, due to accountability requirements, they attempted to use these evaluative statements to fit a measurement rubric that would quantify in some way the participants' learning, but "found the process contrived, somewhat arbitrary and overly reductionist... the result was artificial categories that do not exemplify teaching in ways that would be useful for changing practice" (Veal & Rikard, 1998, p. 21). Greater specificity in assessment criteria may therefore enhance the agreement of assessors and the reliability of assessment, but at a cost to the validity of the practices in question.

As this section suggests, questions of reliability and validity continue to prove challenging for teacher education, requiring approaches to assessment that attend more to notions of authenticity and trustworthiness than traditional understandings of reliability and validity (McLachlan, Fleer & Edwards, 2013). These issues will be discussed in the following sections.

2.8.3. Bias, consistency and fairness

Haigh and Tuck's (1999) study of secondary initial teacher education students in New Zealand used statistical analyses to determine the level of agreement in the assessments conducted by associate teachers and teacher educators. For 150 students, the associate teacher and teacher educator were in agreement in only 74 cases. Haigh and Tuck found the teacher educator to be a harder judge than the associate teacher and propose the root of this discrepancy is the lack of shared expectation and understanding of the assessment criteria. Johnson (2013) further argues that even if there is shared understanding of the assessment construct and participants work from the same evidence base, individual judgements will be evident.

Harrison (2007) conducted a study across three years of a higher education primary teacher education programme in the UK. She reviewed a sample (average 19%) of practicum reports of student teachers, as written by associate teachers, to determine the type of evidence that was provided to justify the achievement of a standards-based assessment protocol. The findings indicated that written responses seemed arbitrary, focused more on descriptive factors than evaluation of practice, and were significantly influenced by the personal beliefs and expectations of the assessor in relation to what was considered an appropriate level of professionalism for the student teacher. This was not consistent across settings or individual participants. Student teachers also report frustration when assessment was not seen to be fairly conducted: "I felt that the [grading] process is not satisfactory and my teacher mentor only observed me at the last minute" (Ligadu, 2005, p. 9).

Concerns related to reliability highlight the need for moderation (Adie, Lloyd & Beutal, 2013). Within initial teacher education programmes there are generally formal requirements for the moderation of student teachers' work, established and monitored as part of the accreditation process of the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC, 2010). For example, Adams and Wolf (2008) describe the way in which student teacher portfolios are reviewed at faculty meetings at University of Texas at Arlington College of Education. Portfolios rated independently by each faculty member and ratings are compared. This is considered to be 'post-assessment' moderation, to determine consistency of grades that have already been awarded, as a means of informing future assessments. No research was found that examined post-assessment moderation of the practicum visits themselves, only documentation or other written artefacts generated in the practicum.

Other moderation efforts focus on 'pre-moderation' whereby those involved in an element of assessment meet prior to the event, in order to ensure that similar standards and expectations are held by the different assessors and criteria are interpreted the same way (Adie, Lloyd & Beutal, 2013). While this step is critical in establishing shared expectations, questions remain as to whether there is consistency in actual assessment practice. What methods and protocols are established within institutions to moderate the quality of the assessment as it is conducted within the practicum setting? Katz (1999) asks "where exactly would I find out what my colleagues teach in their courses? How much do we know about each other's teaching? How should I let my colleagues know what I am trying to teach?" (p. 10). The same questions would appear to be readily applicable to the practicum situation, and are crucial if there is to be consistency across the assessment of practicum.

Conscious or unconscious bias may also be at work in the assessment of practicum, as both teacher educators and associate teachers are noted to be influenced by student characteristics that fall outside the parameters of the assessment. These can include gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and personality traits (Johnson, 2013). Nuttall and Ortlipp (2012) conducted a study of the experiences of culturally and linguistically different students in Australia, reviewing the practicum documentation of four teacher education programmes and interviewing three diverse early childhood student teachers. The findings of the study indicate that practicum can be particularly problematic for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. While there was expressed acceptance of diversity, and difference was seen as valuable, there was little adjustment to programme or assessment methods, and evidence of racist discourses manifested in the professional judgement of assessors.

2.8.4. Shared expectations

One of the challenges frequently noted in relation to the assessment of practicum is that the members of the triad do not seem to share the same expectations. Interpretation of established standards is considered to be problematic. Haigh and Tuck (1999) justify their research of assessment practices by noting that, in their experience, there were significant doubts about whether stakeholders had a genuine shared understanding of the practicum criteria and the standards to be attained.

In Brown and Danaher's (2008) study of 100 student teachers in the first year of an early childhood initial teacher education programme in Australia, a number of their participants reported "a divergence between the contemporary theories of early childhood education espoused by the university and the practice as experienced in some centres" (p. 150). This indicates a difference in expectations between the members of the triad that have flow on implications for the assessment process (Hastings & Squires, 1999). In essence, the teacher educator and the associate teacher would look to see different characteristics demonstrated in the student teachers' practice in making judgement on their competence. Allen's (2011) study of 23 student teachers and associate teachers in a primary practicum in Australia revealed similar issues, with students expressing frustration and concern at the lack of shared expectations between the members of the triad.

To address this concern, Beck and Kosnik (2000) suggest that briefing sessions involve all members of the triad to ensure that all are hearing the same message, and can therefore discuss situations from the same shared understanding and knowledge:

One method we have found that works well is to bring both associates and student teachers together at in-service and liaison meetings; in this way both groups hear the same message and the students have a degree of affirmation and

protection; it strengthens their hand in 'negotiating' their work with associates.

(p. 218)

The importance of induction, training and ongoing support are indicated as critical in ensuring that the expectations and requirements of assessment are clearly understood by all participants (Brown, 2008). Harrison argues that competence/standards based assessment can only be validly used for assessment judgements and decisions when there is a 'context of shared meanings and values' (2007, p.336). This requires frequent open and meaningful conversation leading to collaboration (Hastings & Squires, 1999).

2.8.5. The failing student

To meaningfully consider the role of assessment in practicum situations, it is important to acknowledge that there will be some student teachers who do not meet the standards or competencies expected within a programme. Indeed for a programme to be seen as robust, it may be argued that there must be evidence of students who do not succeed. Little is known about the extent to which student teachers fail in their practicum experiences, and what this experience was like for those involved. In Brown and Danaher's study (2008) they report that initially 6% of the 100 students were identified as being at risk of, or had failed, their first year of teaching experience, while this dropped to 1% failure and 3% considered at risk, when feedback from student teacher and stakeholders was implemented into a revised programme with greater support. Some institutions appear to follow a model that allows student teachers repeated opportunities to experience success, as for example reported by Adams and Wolf (2008). Others apply stricter protocols in removing student teachers from the programme of study. Of note is the Kane report (2003) in which institutions were asked to comment on their protocols for failing students. Responses typically encompassed strategies such as institutional support, counselling, suggested withdrawal from the programme, and enforced withdrawal

from the programme. Hastings (2008) interviewed sixteen associate teachers of primary and secondary student teachers in Australia who had supported students who had failed their practicum. Her findings indicated the emotional cost of failure and she argues the need for greater support to help associate teachers to cope with the emotional outcomes of a challenging practicum. Given the limited research information available on this dimension of practicum assessment, it appears important to gather perspectives from the key stakeholders regarding their beliefs and practices when addressing the issue of a student teacher who is 'failing'.

Hawe (2001) discovered reluctance amongst tertiary educators to award a failing grade. Her interviews with staff and students in a primary initial teacher education programme in New Zealand and review of programme documentation revealed a number of situations in which the lecturer or department ignored or manipulated the required regulations and procedures in order to give students further chances, even when there was clear reason to award a fail grade. Hawe (2001, p. 17) states that:

Lecturers perhaps saw assessment as serving a purpose different to that intended (ie: an affirming and encouraging role rather than a gatekeeping role) hence their reluctance to award a fail. Constructing assessment as an affirming process gave them the license to utilise 'other' criteria when making a judgement. Thus the awarding of a pass grade is rationalised and a fail grade avoided.

Examples were provided by both lecturers and student teachers of situations in which students were awarded grades that they had not legitimately earned through meeting the course requirements. Some lecturers expressed justifications for these situations in relation to the student teacher's qualities, character or influencing circumstances, or as recompense for errors/omissions on the lecturer's behalf. Other lecturers, however, expressed frustration and anger at some decisions that they witnessed or felt pressured to support. Hawe (2001)

describes three situations in which the decision made by the visiting lecturer to award a fail was later over-ridden at an institutional level, despite agreement between the associate teacher and the teacher educator.

The findings of these studies suggest that the response to failing students is complex and challenging, as assessors and institutions seek to balance the needs of the student with commitment to expected standards for the profession, requiring a range of approaches to assessment as explored in the following section.

2.9. Alternative assessment approaches

Harrison (2007) suggests that the teacher education field is moving closer to agreement on standards for teaching, but less focus has been paid to determining appropriate assessment measures and methods to gather evidence on the attainment of these standards; “for the teacher/tutor assessors however, the challenge may be less on ‘what to measure’ and more on ‘how to measure’” (p. 326). The question of how to measure has led to a range of alternative assessment models being proposed, in order to potentially enrich the assessment process. The development of teaching portfolios has been a particular initiative, as well as increasing use of technology, case studies and action research (Edwards, 2012; Simpson, 2006).

Adams and Wolf (2008), in reporting on the Early Childhood Special Education programme (ECSE) at the University of Colorado - Denver, highlighted that the use of portfolios allowed student teachers to provide evidence of the ways in which they meet required standards.

Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000, p. 537) similarly consider that:

Teacher portfolios provide opportunities for robust documentation of practice. As an assessment tool, they can provide a comprehensive look at how the various aspects of a teacher’s practice... come together... so much happens so fast that it

is a blur. Portfolios help make teaching stand still long enough to be examined, shared and learned from.

However, for portfolios to be truly effective and meaningful, it appears that student teachers need clear and explicit guidance as to what types of items might be included (Adams & Wolf, 2008), or they feel overwhelmed and unsure. Bannink (2009) raises concerns as to the validity of portfolios, arguing there can be observed discrepancies between the quality of work within a portfolio and actual teaching practices as demonstrated in the educational setting. This can occur in two ways: the written work is of a better standard than the teaching practice, and thus may give a false sense of competence; or alternately, the quality of teaching practice is good, but the student is not able to effectively translate that into written evidence. Alternative assessment approaches generate challenges that assessors must attend to in ensuring trustworthy assessment outcomes. In the next section of the review, key practicum literature that describes the assessment experiences of student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators is examined.

2.10. Assessment experiences

2.10.1. Student teacher experiences

One of the most common findings reported in relation to the student teachers' experience of assessment is that they find it stressful (Ligadu, 2005). Murray-Harvey, Silins and Saebel (1999, p. 32) comment that "stress experienced by students in their practicum has been reported in enough studies to indicate that it is not an isolated phenomenon". They go on to report that the primary causes of stress were related to evaluation anxiety, being observed, inconsistencies in assessment, different expectations of performance and variations in the feedback provided by assessors. It is clear that assessment is the source of much apprehension and high emotion. Mau (1997) found that student teachers were very concerned about getting

a favourable evaluation, and struggled with the variability of assessment expectations between teacher educators and associate teachers. Harwell and Moore (2010) likewise found that student teachers' greatest concern was their performance while on practicum, and how this was perceived by others; however they did find that 82% of the participants in their survey reported feeling confident during classroom observation by associate teachers or teacher educators. This may indicate that student teachers feel more stress prior to, or entering an assessment situation, but are able to reflect positively on the assessment experience after the event.

Bradbury and Koballa's (2008) in-depth case studies of two associate teacher and student teacher mentoring pairs found that students do what they think is required to pass the assessment. This focus on assessment outcomes and trying to please the assessor has implications not only for the teaching practice demonstrated, but also on the student's ability to fully contribute as collaborative member of the triadic relationship. Research suggests student teachers are often afraid to speak out because they are concerned about the effect this may have on their assessment (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Haigh, 2001). This theme of needing to 'please' the assessor, either the associate teacher or the teacher educator, is common in student reflections (Turnbull, 1999). A number of authors raise concern about this 'need to please', arguing that it manifests itself in the guise of conformity (Goodnough, et al., 2009), whereby student teachers do exactly what their associate teacher does, whether or not this reflects best practice, and is supported by the theoretical teaching of their teacher education programme (Kersh, 1995). Bradbury and Koballa (2008) reflect on studies which found that student teachers followed the style and approach of their associate teacher exactly, even including body language, mannerisms and verbal language patterns. Tension arises when the teacher educator comes into the educational setting to assess the student teacher, particularly if the practices differ from those espoused by the training institution (Brown & Danaher,

2008). Does the student teacher continue to model the actions of the associate, or do they amend their practice to demonstrate competence in qualities desired by their training programme? Kersh (1995) describes this as a conflict between congeniality and collegiality. Who should students please in this situation? What does their choice reflect about the authenticity of their teaching practice?

Cattley (2007) argues that, “preservice teachers who take risks in their pedagogies are particularly vulnerable if by doing so, their mentor teachers identify them as being out of tune with their own way of thinking... If the chosen pedagogy is substantially different to that of the mentor teacher and this in turn leads to criticism of the pre-service teacher, the latter’s growing sense of professional identity could well be shaken” (p. 338). Haigh (2001), as part of a larger project, reported a case study of one student and her experiences in a secondary school science practicum. She found that the student teacher was tentative and unprepared to challenge the authority of the other participants in the triad, despite the associate teacher and teacher educator seeking to establish collaborative, equal relationships.

There is some indication that the assessment role does have a bearing on the relationships that the student teacher develops with both their associate and the teacher educator. In Beck and Kosnik’s (2000) study the role of the primary assessor was given to the associate teacher, rather than the teacher educator. In contrast to other studies, students here reported better relationships with the teacher educator and more difficulty with the associate teacher. “In the interviews, the associate teachers repeatedly said they did not think their evaluative role affected their relationship with the student teachers, but this was not how the students saw it: again and again they expressed fears to the faculty about their evaluations” (p. 217).

One of the concerns expressed by student teachers is that the assessment of their practicum will be influenced by the nature of their relationship with their associate teacher, or teacher educator. The intensely relational nature of the practicum experience leads to the potential for conflict and personality issues, which may influence the assessment judgements made.

Bradbury and Koballa (2008) suggest that there is often a tension underlying these relationships, even when they appear on the surface to be positive and collegial. One example is provided in Campbell-Evans and Maloney's (2007) study of sixteen final year primary and early childhood student teachers who undertook an extended practicum experience in Australia. One student teacher became upset in a tutorial situation and was considering withdrawing from the programme because she believed her associate teacher was comparing her to a previous student, and had developed pre-conceived judgements that had led to her being given a grade that she believed was biased and unfair. Her reaction, in seeking to withdraw from the programme, emphasises the importance that student teachers attach to the assessment experience – they know it is high stakes, and has significant implications for both their study and their career prospects. It is also of note that the student teacher did not feel able in this circumstance to address the outcome of the assessment with her associate teacher. This raises questions as to whether or not student teachers feel that they have the ability or power to challenge assessment decisions. Roberts and Graham (2008) acknowledge student teachers' use of 'tactical compliance' in order to ensure that relationships were maintained, and assessment outcomes protected.

Murphy and Butcher's (2009) report on a study funded by Ako Aotearoa, the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence in New Zealand, focused on the practicum experiences of year one early childhood student teachers. Eleven students participated in a semi-structured, focus group interview that captured their experience in relation to four dimensions: relationships, assessment, goal setting and field-based teacher education. In investigating assessment, the

researchers asked, 'how do teaching practice assessments conducted by the [teacher educator] contribute to students' learning and to the strengthening of their teaching practice?' (p. 3). While five of the eleven students voiced positive assessment experiences, a number of 'nerve-wracking' experiences were reported, related to fear around summative outcomes. Associate teachers were seen by the students to be the source of formative assessment feedback, while teacher educators were responsible for summative assessment requirements.

There is some evidence to suggest that increasing student involvement and participation in the initial stages of the assessment process increases the preparedness for and ownership of the practicum experiences (Keesing-Styles, 2003). Keesing-Styles found that when student teachers were involved in generating the assessment criteria, they proved competent in identifying appropriate and relevant teaching practices and in making connections to their own professional practice. However, this report only presents the reflections of Keesing-Styles following the change to assessment practices, and does not present the student teachers' own voice or analysis of this experience.

Authentic approaches typically call for greater participation of the student teacher in the assessment process. Lew, Alwis and Schmidt (2009, p. 2) state that "one of the main purposes of authentic assessment is to encourage students to become involved more actively in monitoring and reviewing their own performance". If assessment information is to be seen as meaningful, contextually grounded and representative it must include the contribution of the student, who has unique understanding of their own practice (Iverson, Lewis & Talbot, 2008). Dayan (2008) argues that typical assessment models foster a sense of dependence in student teachers, whereby they look to the associate teacher or teacher educator for an evaluation of their teaching practice, for affirmation and feedback. He suggests that if assessment criteria are more collaboratively determined, then student teachers will be more likely to engage in

self-assessment in an ongoing, meaningful manner. In concluding her synthesis of research in the area of assessment feedback, Kahu (2008) states there is a growing awareness that feedback should no longer be viewed as a one-way transmission model, whereby the student is a passive recipient, and that more research is needed in investigating effective models of student engagement with feedback and assessment. The opportunity for self-assessment supports student teachers' learning through strengthening their capacity to evaluate the quality of their own work. However, it also frames the student teacher's understanding of assessment process itself, which is critical in shaping this key requirement of their own future teaching practice (Joughin, 2009).

Involvement in the assessment process may not be a natural or straightforward process for student teachers (or the educators and institution), and may require specific training and support for the process to be effective. Keesing-Styles (2003) described her experiences in trying to engage student teachers in their own assessment, and suggests that:

Some students are immediately capable of defining appropriate and meaningful criteria as the basis for assessment and strive to set goals that reflect their own context and their own learning and practice needs. But some lack confidence, knowledge, experience or self-efficacy to do so individually. Some students will offer suggestions for practice that they think will meet the 'requirements' of the teacher. Some will generate statements that strongly reflect dominant and traditional discourses or teacher behaviours. Some will be superficial in their thinking. (*Everyday Life and Powerful Students*, para 8)

However, she suggests growth is possible if there is meaningful and purposeful engagement in the assessment process that moves beyond mere discussion to involve critical participation in which student teachers are able to develop their experience and expertise. The findings of

Norsworthy's (2008) New Zealand doctoral research supported this position in concluding "assessment experiences which enable personal connection leading to ownership, self-awareness and justification... have significant potential for the development and sustaining of a professional perception and consideration lens" (p. 211).

2.10.2. Teacher educator experiences

Dayan (2008) considers research that examines the perspective of the teacher educator is limited with little focus on the "character, quality and definition" (p. 155) of the role. He argues that most studies focus on the problem or difficulties of the supervision process, rather than the way the role is conceptualised and enacted. The conceptualisation of the role of the teacher educator is complex and multi-faceted. Faire (1994) interviewed 20 teacher educators responsible for assessing final year primary student teachers in New Zealand, and found that the relational components of the practicum experience were seen as critical. The teacher educators believed the success of the practicum was grounded in the quality of relationships that were developed between the members of the triad. A break down in relationship between any of those involved was seen to be a major impediment to the learning and development of the student teacher, and to the ability of those involved to assess the practicum in an effective way.

The role of the teacher educator is dynamic, shifting in accordance with the needs of the given situation. For example the teacher educator interviewed in Haigh's (2001) study commented that at times it was necessary just to 'monitor', given the strength of the relationship between the associate teacher and student teacher. However, for other triads a much more intensive role was required, and the relationship between teacher educator and student teacher strengthened. The teacher educator believed that it was particularly important to support the

student teacher when there were issues in the relationship with the associate teacher, serving as a mediator and buffer.

The teacher educator is often viewed as the 'expert' by the other members of the triad, as a result of the nominated position they hold with the ITE institution. Sometimes this 'expert' role is viewed positively, while at other times there is reported resentment, particularly from associate teachers, who see their own experience and knowledge as of equal value. However, teacher educators themselves may not share this belief about their role. For example, Campbell-Evan and Maloney (1997), in designing an alternative model of practicum, explicitly state: "as university teachers, we were keen to counter the 'expert myth' which defines university knowledge as being superior to practitioner knowledge" (p. 37). Field (2002) suggests that the role of 'expert' is one that shifts with the developmental progression of student teachers across their teacher education programme, with teacher educators indicating that they are more likely to offer direct guidance and modelling in the early phases of training, moving to advocate and facilitator roles as the student teacher approaches the completion of their course.

Bradbury and Koballa (2008) suggest that the teacher educator must serve as the mediator of the triad, "who help[s] to facilitate discussions that promote clear articulations of the expectations of both partners, as well as those of the university" (p. 2143). The teacher educator is considered to have the skills to help the other members of the triad negotiate the challenges of their relationship. Teacher educators may have to serve as mediators between the two key settings, to help the student teacher meaningfully and intentionally combine the knowledge offered within both. At times this mediation may be necessary in order to seek an appropriate resolution to a conflict situation, arising from either professional or personal issues between the members of the triad.

As with associate teachers, teacher educators report that at times there is a sense of tension and discomfort between their role as a mentor, guide and teacher to students, and the realities of conducting formal assessment (Copland, 2010). In some ways they must manage dual roles, trying to navigate smoothly between them in the best interest of the triad members, the educational setting, as well as the ITE institution. Hawe (2001, p. 18) comments that teachers who then become teacher educators “may well have encountered a conflict between their beliefs about the role of the teacher and a key component of their role as a lecturer within a tertiary teacher education institution ie: their role as an initial gatekeeper to the teaching profession”.

Teacher educators do not always feel prepared or equipped for their role in the practicum (Murray & Male, 2005). Some will have entered the role because of their experience as a teacher in the field (Dayan, 2008). Others may have followed an academic route, gaining higher level qualifications and or research skills that lead to their appointment. There may be little induction to the role (Murray & Male, 2005) which, when coupled with the lack of a consistent theory of supervision, creates a situation in which there is an individual approach “enacted on the basis of common senses and intuition” (Dayan, 2008, p. 156).

One challenge is the potential for discordance between the views of teacher educators and associate teachers in their expectations and beliefs about the practicum. For example, Beck and Kosnik (2000) found that associate teachers were quite inflexible, wanting student teachers to fit into the existing classroom pattern, whereas the teacher educators believed that “student teachers should have considerable time to observe and reflect and a degree of freedom to innovate and press the limits of what is possible in contemporary schools” (p. 218). This position suggests a fundamental difference in belief as to the purpose of the practicum and teacher education: the associate teachers want to equip student teachers for the reality of

teaching practice; while the teacher educator wants to inspire the student teacher to be innovating for future best practice.

Experience of discord or discomfort in practicum assessment is not isolated to only the student and the associate teacher. Research also indicates that teacher educators may experience anxiety about the way in which their feedback and assessment might be received by the others (Joughin, 2009). Teacher educators report that at times they must temper their response in order to maintain a positive working relationship with the educational setting. Not all educational settings are models of exemplary teaching practice (Katz, 1999). Educators are aware that there are times where to comment on an element of a student teacher's practice that is of concern, could in fact be seen to be passing critical judgement on the setting or the associate, if they are modelling and enforcing this practice themselves. Ortlipp (2003) found that teacher educators often chose silence over voice, if they felt that they might cause offense, aware of their role as 'guest' in the early childhood setting, as well as an institutional representative who may have on-going connections with the setting.

Katz (1999) writes of her experiences as a teacher educator and the dilemmas that emerged when there was a significant discrepancy between the practices advocated by the teacher education programme and the reality as manifested in the daily practice of early childhood centres. She states: "the extent to which the practices we recommended were discrepant with those observed and applied at the practicum sites was easily 70%!" (p. 9). The dilemmas that she outlines include:

- Should we undermine the students' perceptions of the professional competence of their cooperating teacher?
- Should we knowingly, intentionally – if reluctantly – alienate our students from their cooperating teachers?

- Should we encourage compliance with current practices?
- Whose credibility concerning teaching methods is greater in the eyes of the students: the college instructors' or the practicing teachers?
- Should we disavow the placement site's practices and practitioners and put the students in a difficult bind or let them acquire the site's largely faulty practices and hope for the best? Which are the 'least worse errors'? (p. 9)

Dayan (2008) found that teacher educators tend to conceptualise their role in visiting students primarily as an assessment exercise, rather than as a time for guidance and promoting professional growth. Conformity to institutional guidelines is expected, with little latitude given for independent initiatives. He argues that such behaviourally-oriented approaches are in discord with the more humanistic/democratic principles that are promoted within early childhood education and practices with young children. This discord may lead to internal conflict for teacher educators, where they are supervising the practicum in a manner that is not congruent with their own beliefs about teaching and assessment, or the methods/practices that they teach, an issue noted in the 'confessions' of teacher educators (Power and Perry, 2002). Such conflict was also reflected in Haigh's (2001) study, in which the teacher educator struggled to find a metaphor that would adequately encompass the formative and summative elements of her role. She wanted to be collaborative in her approach, building a responsive relationship with the student teacher, but also acknowledged the need for her to provide oversight and accountability as to the student teacher's practice, creating a "tension between her role as assessor and her wish to help the student teacher collaboratively in a more formative manner" (p. 17).

Of note is the significant role that the affective domain plays in such situations. There is perhaps a more ready acceptance of student teachers' stress, anxiety and worry, with less so

for those seen as the 'professionals' within the triadic relationship. However, as Hawe (2001) explains, teacher educators often feel a high level of anxiety and concern when faced with a student teacher who is not meeting the expressed expectations of the programme of study. It appears that lecturers may personalise the fail grade, "firstly as an observation on the worth of the student and secondly as a reflection on their own merit as a lecturer" (Hawe, 2001, p. 16). Joughin (2009) suggests that teacher educators experience stress in managing assessment, partly due to prior experiences, but also as a result of present workload requirements and the challenges of dealing with "disappointed and sometimes irate students" (p. 14).

It appears that teacher educators at times feel that they have to temper and adjust their responses in order to achieve what they deem to be a positive outcome for the practicum. They are responsible for managing the different (and sometimes competing) needs of the student teacher, early childhood centre and training institution, and ensuring that ongoing relationships between the parties are effective and collegial. Lomas (1999) describes his experience as one where "I was very aware of trying to tread softly in the issues I raised and the words I used so as to minimise possible discomfort and tension in order to enhance the possibility of productive dialogue" (p. 21). Ortlipp (2003) also found that teacher educators made purposeful choices as to whether to use voice or silence in the assessment meeting in order to maintain relationships.

2.10.3. Associate teacher experiences

Beck and Kosnik (2000) identify two broad conceptions of the role of the associate teacher: the practical initiation model; and the critical interventionist model. In the practical initiation model, associate teachers are primarily concerned with inducting student teachers into the field as it currently is, i.e., supporting the status quo. They see themselves as a supportive, practical guide to the reality of teaching. In the critical intervention model, associate teachers

assert a broader role, in challenging student teachers to “question current practices and develop more appropriate alternatives” (Beck & Kosnik, 2000, p. 208).

Haigh (2001) outlines the multiple roles held by the associate teacher, which indicate the many expectations of this practitioner. She identifies that associate teachers are seen to be responsible for providing a quality learning environment, supporting the student into the wider context of the setting, demonstrating excellent practice, and knowledge of educational theory. They must supervise, collaborate, discuss, support, guide, and foster reflection, new ideas and confidence. Assessment is just one component of these multiple responsibilities, and may indeed be a point of tension, as support and evaluation purposes are balanced.

Whilst there are acknowledged challenges, associate teachers predominantly find the practicum experience to be valuable and satisfying (Beck & Kosnik, 2000), with rewards in both the professional and personal domains. The relationship with the student teacher and the contribution that the student teacher brings to the education settings in relation to fresh ideas, new perspectives and critical learning conversations are frequently acknowledged. This contribution is also seen by associates teachers as of positive benefit to the children involved (Beck & Kosnik, 2000). Associate teachers report greater satisfaction in their role when they feel supported themselves and have the opportunity to build collaborative relationships with the teacher educators and the educational institution (Hastings & Squires, 1999). When they are valued in their role, and as individuals, associate teachers reflect that they develop, both personally and professionally.

However, associate teachers do also report that they find their role challenging and that at times they have concerns about their experiences in supporting student teachers (Mitchell, Clarke & Nuttall, 2007). One of the primary concerns reported is a lack of time to support the

student teacher to the level that they wish (Hastings & Squires, 1999). Teachers across educational settings report significant workloads, and so the introduction of a student teacher to the setting is one more draw upon potentially limited timeframes. This may negatively impact the quality of the practicum experience for all concerned; when both the student teacher and the associate teacher feel that they are not able to meet the expectations for effective learning. Lack of time for engagement and discussion with the student teacher may cause the associate teacher to return to a more technicist model (McDonald, 2005a), focusing on the practical nuts and bolts of teaching, without the time for reflection and critical conversations that are seen as so valuable.

In considering the role and experience of associate teachers in the assessment of practicum, it is important to note that participation in assessment will vary considerably across programmes and models. Some associate teachers are given full responsibility for the assessment of the student teacher, as in Beck and Kosnik's study (2000). Other associate teachers will play a collaborative role in the assessment process, contributing their perspective within the triadic relationship. For some, the role of associate teacher will hold no formal assessment function at all, focusing more on mentoring and support. The literature suggests that associate teachers are positioned to provide more formative assessment, while the teacher educator, on behalf of the institution is given the primary role of final summative assessment (Mitchell, Clarke & Nuttall, 2007).

As identified in other studies previously reported, one of the stresses acknowledged by associate teachers is their responsibility for assessment within the practicum. They identify a tension between the supportive nature of the mentoring role, and the evaluative nature of assessment protocols (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008; Haigh, 2001). The potential for conflict is an influential factor; associate teachers report remaining silent at times when they have felt that

their feedback to student teachers would lead to conflict – either with the student themselves, or the teacher educator.

Beck and Kosnik (2000) report on a model of practicum in which the associate teacher is given the primary responsibility for the assessment of student teachers. They found that these associate teachers were more inclined to be directive in their guidance to student teacher, and to invest more in the mentoring relationship. They argue that “having them evaluate the student teachers gives them a vote of confidence, a higher status and a sense of ownership which encourages them to take charge of fostering student teacher development” (p. 216).

Associate teachers also report dissatisfaction when there is limited communication with tertiary institutions and frustration when there are unclear expectations and unstated goals in the assessment process (Hastings & Squires, 1999). When communication is not open and frequent, there is the potential for adversarial feelings between these members of the triad, which can inhibit a more collaborative assessment process. The role of relationships in assessment is further explored in the next section of the review.

2.11. Assessment in the context of relationships

Socio-cultural theories of learning suggest that practice is not developed in isolation, but rather is co-constructed within specific sites contexts, and within key relationships (Robbins, 2007; Rogoff, 2003). This is certainly the case for practicum. Practicum is a social and relational act (Haigh & Ell, 2014). It may be argued that for a given period of time, a set of participants come together to form a temporary community (Goodnough, et al., 2009), in which the novice teacher works closely with others to negotiate a shared understanding and shared repertoire of practice. This includes the key actors of student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator, but also encompasses other characters including the other staff, families and

children of the educational setting. When working well, the practicum relationships can offer much to the participants, but such relationships are also very vulnerable, with potential for conflict, anxiety and discord.

Caires, Almeida and Vieira (2012) suggest that attention has shifted in research from considering the individual roles and responsibilities of the triad members, to greater consideration of the affective-relational elements of the student teacher-assessor relationships. From a student teacher's perspective, warm and positive relationships appear to be one of the most defining characteristics of an effective practicum (Haigh, 2005). The participants in practicum work closely together, interacting on both a personal and professional level. Student teachers actively desire a relationship with the associate teacher that is friendly, open, and responsive. Student teachers indicate marked dissatisfaction, and increased stress and frustration when positive relationships do not eventuate (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008). Similarly:

We found the match between student teachers and the programme, the school and the teacher to have a profound effect on the relationships which formed and ultimately on the degree of success... where there was a clash of philosophy and belief about teaching, relationships became strained and student development was limited. (Campbell-Evans & Maloney, 1997, p. 46)

Doxey (1996) framed her study around the importance of the relationship context in facilitating the best outcomes for early childhood education students and states that positive relationships "nurture openness in reflection; support the risk taking that leads to change and improvement; reduces a student's anxiety and; improves confidence and competence" (p. 5). Her survey of 142 student teachers in an early childhood teacher education programme in Toronto asked participants to identify and rank the most important characteristics of the

associate teacher and the teacher educator. Eighty three percent ranked personal or relational qualities as the most important for associate teachers, while in comparison only 16% identified professional competence as the most important quality. Similar results were also found in relation to the desired qualities of teacher educators. These findings affirm the proposition that the quality of the personal relationship is seen by student teachers as significantly more important in the practicum relationship than the professional competence of associate teachers and teacher educators. Relationships are also seen as significant in helping the student teacher to negotiate the terrain of teaching and assist student teachers in developing their professional identity (Haigh, 2005). It appears that the most effective outcomes of practicum emerge within a collaborative model of teacher education where teacher educators and associate teachers work closely together with a shared understanding of the purpose and vision of practicum. As Haigh suggests, "If these three groups of people are to work together for quality pre-service teacher education then they need to have shared understandings and expectations of the roles that they play and the relationships that they will be developing" (2001, p. 2). Positive relationships are also shown to minimise student teacher stress, and to act as a buffer (Caires, Almeida, & Vieira, 2012) to some of the identified challenges of practicum assessment.

One of the most significant impediments to successful practicum experiences lies in a lack of congruence in the way the different members of the triadic conceptualise their role (Hastings & Squire, 1999), and their expectations of practicum experience. Bradbury and Koballa (2008) suggest that participants may carry idealised images of the practicum relationships, and that when these "do not materialise, disillusionment and tension can result" (p. 2134). One participant in their study encapsulated this dilemma in stating "I have this idea of what I want her [the student teacher] to be like and she just wants to do everything I say" (p. 2138). This associate teacher had an expectation of a student teacher who was independent and self-

governing, who would appreciate her advice, but would use it as a catalyst for growth. The student on the other hand, most definitely saw herself in the novice role, and desperately sought the guidance, support and feedback of the 'expert' teacher. This difference in expectations had implications for the quality of their relationship, marked by frustration and a lack of mutual satisfaction. The only participant of this study to indicate satisfaction with their mentoring relationship was the student teacher whose experience most closely matched her initial expectations. Brown and Danaher (2008) similarly argue that dissonance in expectation arises from the fact that each member of the triadic has different interests, both explicit and implicit, and that these interests are often to some extent in competition with each other. While each may seek peaceful, productive relationships, the reality is that those involved will have their own agenda, their own bias and thus dissonance and tension must in some way be anticipated, and then worked through. They suggest that "understanding that those interests are sometimes conflicting, contested and even controversial helps to make the practicum partnerships and the associated collaborative learning more, not less, likely to be effective and equitable" (Brown & Danaher, 2008, p. 150).

2.11.1. Practicum assessment and power

As teacher education positions itself within social-constructivist paradigms of learning and teaching, notions of power and hierarchy in the roles of the triad members have come under scrutiny. Bloomfield (1997, p. 27) argues that "the practicum is commonly a point of focus around which issues of power and ownership are contested". Power resides with the institution to determine and shape the nature of the practicum experience (Hastings & Squires, 1999) and there is a clear hierarchy of triad members (Turnbull, 1999) in their role and responsibility in relation to assessment (Veal & Rikard, 1998). Cattley (2007) asserts that such power dynamics can become a focus of practicum relationships, and can be detrimental to the professional growth of the student teacher.

Ortlipp (2003a, 2003b) explores the notion of voice and silence in the assessment of practicum, and proposes that power differentials limit the genuine sharing of all voices, as well as open and honest dialogue. Field (2002) posits the need for traditional power dynamics to shift to more egalitarian relationships in which “supervisors and their students embark on a practicum journey together, with reflective discussion and meaningful collaboration as their guide” (p. 1). Wilson (2006) reflects that when there are conflicting ideas between the associate teacher and the teacher educator, the student will more often adopt the associate’s approach, however in terms of final assessment decision making, the associate teacher is often excluded, or given a limited role. Power can thus be viewed as a fluid entity, which changes according to the demands of the situation.

Partnership models of teacher education which seek to address power differences between educational settings and institutions have seen closer working relationships between the sites, but hierarchical relationships tend to remain (Bloomfield, 2009), especially in relation to assessment decision making. Grudnoff and Williams (2010) report on a New Zealand project to push the boundaries of the traditional partnership model of practicum, through reconceptualising the roles of the participants, enhancing the collaborative nature of relationships and giving significantly greater responsibility to the education setting for both learning and assessment. Findings of the study suggest that more collaborative approaches can disestablish traditional hierarchies and can serve to enhance student teacher learning in practice, through stronger intersection of theory and practice. However, they highlight that the required investment of time and financial constraints were significant challenges in scaling this model to the wider population of students.

Interestingly, it appears that student teachers themselves may not seek a more equal share of power in the practicum setting. Rather, there is evidence that student teachers value explicit

guidance, direction and feedback from the associate teacher (Haigh, Pinder & McDonald, 2006); features more commonly associated with the 'expert' mantle. This may provide them with a sense of security when facing a situation that is complex, ambiguous and challenging.

Keesing-Styles (2003) argues that as educators wrestle with shifting pedagogies and the post-modern arguments stemming from critical theory, the form and substance of assessment must change:

To achieve a critical approach to assessment, it must be centred on dialogic interactions so that the roles of teacher and learner are shared and all voices are validated... such an approach no doubt creates challenges and discomfort but opens up creative possibilities for the reinvention of assessment" (Keesing-Styles, 2003, *The Relationship Between Critical Pedagogy and Assessment*, para 2).

2.12. Conclusion and justification for the study

The literature reveals that practicum is positioned as a critical, yet challenging component of initial teacher education. Outcomes for student teachers are a key focus, but the way in which assessment practices are enacted and experienced has received limited attention. Burke, Cowell, Olwell and Osta (2008) argue that research in the teacher education field offers little opportunity for student teachers and associate teachers to have their voice heard. There is a need for research that allows the perspectives and experiences of all participants to be honoured and utilised to guide the direction of future teacher education initiatives. As Cameron and Baker (2004) note, most studies in initial teacher education capture small snapshots of practice, indicating a need for studies with a wider scope. The literature highlights the complexity and problematic nature of the assessment of practicum, and suggests that many questions remain unanswered in relation to best practice in this area.

Given that assessment is a high stakes exercise for students, as well as other stakeholders, it is imperative that research examine and critique current practice with a view to supporting future policy and decision-making. Haigh, Ell and Mackisack (2013, p. 2) argue that “we need to tap into the understandings and evidences utilised by teachers and faculty in making their decisions about prospective teachers”. This review has indicated that there is a limited body of research that considers the assessment of practicum within the context of early childhood initial teacher education and investigates the experience of practicum from the multiple viewpoints of the key stakeholders. Cameron and Baker (2004, p. 50) state that “there is a need within New Zealand for more in-depth, evidence based research on the complex triadic relationship of the student teacher, associate teacher and the teacher educator”. This study is a response to that need, guided by the overarching research question: *“How is the assessment of practicum enacted and experienced by key stakeholders in early childhood initial teacher education?”* The present study responds to the identified gaps in research, as framed in the following research objectives.

1. To critically examine how a representative sample of New Zealand teacher education providers assess early childhood practicum.
2. To critically examine the beliefs, perceptions and experiences of the key stakeholders in practicum assessment.
3. To identify the factors that support authentic assessment of student teachers’ practice during practicum.

The following chapter describes the way in which these research objectives were operationalised in the development of the research, outlining the epistemological beliefs that guided the study, as well as the design decisions, methodological choices and ethical position adopted.

Chapter Three - Methodology

3.1. Introduction

Research is shaped and driven by the beliefs, values, needs and choices of the researcher. It is not value free or apolitical. Guba and Lincoln (2008) argue that values feed the enquiry process in the “choice of the problem, choice of paradigm to guide the problem, choice of theoretical framework, choice of major data-gathering and data-analytic methods, choice of context, treatment of values already resident within the context, and choice of format(s) for presenting findings” (p. 264-265). Drawing on the framework provided by Crotty (1998), this chapter describes the epistemological principles, theoretical perspective and methodological decisions that shaped this project and explains the way in which the research was conceptualised, designed and enacted, with supporting justification for the choices made. Initial discussion positions the current study within the constructivist epistemology, with an interpretivist theoretical perspective. The methodological framework of the study is then introduced, describing the pragmatic, mixed methods approach that guided research design, data-gathering and analysis and then outlines the way in which social-constructivism theory, and specifically the work of Barbara Rogoff (2003), provided the framework for the research design and analysis. The chapter concludes in providing an overview of the research design and methods, outlining the decisions that shaped the field-work, with consideration of the ethical implications of the study.

3.2. Positioning the research in the interpretivist paradigm

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) describe a paradigm “as a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (p. 245). They suggest that a paradigm encompasses the four key elements of ethics, epistemology, ontology and methodology. Each paradigm has its own criteria, assumptions

and methodological practices. It is important to both understand and articulate the way in which design choices are determined by paradigmatic beliefs.

The current study is positioned in the interpretivist paradigm, with an emphasis on the phenomenon of practicum assessment, and the experiences and meaning-making of participants (Gray, 2004). Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2007, pp. 20-21) provide a valuable definition of the beliefs that distinguish the interpretivist paradigm, which have been utilised in framing the following discussion, to explain the approach taken in the current study.

In interpretivist research, participants are seen to be active, purposeful and intentional; meaning makers who construct and interpret their social world (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). This methodological position is congruent with constructivism, with its underpinning epistemological position that people actively construct their own meanings through engagement in their social settings (Guba & Lincoln, 2008). This study is predicated on the epistemological belief that the social world is constructed and mediated as a result of interaction and engagement and does not exist independently of the participants (Gray, 2004). It is manifest as a result of inter-subjective awareness among people, constructed of ideas, norms, thoughts and practices at a given point of time and place. A social-constructivist approach is utilised as the predominant framework in accordance with the key purpose of the study: to discover the practices, beliefs and 'lived experiences' of all of the participants involved in the assessment of practicum (Patton, 2002b, p. 268).

For the constructivist researcher, the thoughts, actions, beliefs, expectations and assumptions of the participants are of utmost importance (Patton, 2002a). The appropriateness of utilising this approach is summarised by Trumball (2005, p. 101): "The qualitative approach is inductive, with the purpose of describing multiple realities, developing deep understanding and

capturing everyday life and human perspectives". In defining the practicum as a socially constructed event, an interpretive approach within the constructivist paradigm appeared the most cohesive and appropriate framework to guide the research.

This study investigated the way in which student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators actively engaged in the act of practicum assessment: both individually through the roles that they take and the meaning that they afford to assessment practices and experiences; as well as collectively, in the way that participants join together within the context of the practicum triad. The research task was not thus to determine a 'universal truth' (Guba & Lincoln, 2008) about practicum assessment, but rather to determine the ways in which participants engaged in practicum assessment and made meaning of their experiences.

Interpretivism prioritises context. Behaviours and events are seen to be 'situated activities' that are affected by contextual influences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 20). This study positioned practicum as a situated activity, and sought to capture understanding of the institutional context, the social context, and the personal context that shaped the way practicum was enacted and experienced by the key participants. Consideration of the context of a phenomenon supports a focus on meaning making and understanding that is central to constructivist epistemology (Gray, 2004).

Interpretivism proposes a research approach that studies the social world in its natural state without the intervention or manipulation of the researcher (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). This study is illuminatory and exploratory in nature (Punch, 2009). Each phase of the research was designed to capture the practices that are enacted during assessment and the way in which the stakeholders experience these practices. The research did not begin with an hypothesis or foregone position that it was seeking to prove (Guba & Lincoln, 2008) and nor

did it involve any sort of intervention. It was instead driven by a series of questions that sought to illuminate a phenomenon from the perspective of those involved. Theory generation occurred as a result of, rather than a precursor to, the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

Interpretivist research acknowledges that there are multiple interpretations of, and perspectives on, events and situations and views knowledge as personal, subjective and unique (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). This belief was central to the approach to this study. From the inception of the study, the intent was always to explore the perspectives of all of the key participants in the assessment act, as well as the perspective of the institution. It was anticipated that student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators would have different experiences and perceptions of practicum assessment, and that it was important to interrogate the perspective of each to establish a greater understanding of the practicum assessment phenomenon (Gray, 2004).

Interpretivism views reality as multi-layered and complex, and values 'thick' descriptions of an event that represent the complexity (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). My own experiences of practicum assessment, coupled with wide reading of the literature support the contention that practicum assessment is a complex event, influenced by many different elements. This study adopted a multi-phase, multi-site and multi-method approach in an effort to capture the complexity of practicum assessment. Foregrounding (Rogoff, 2003) was used to define each of the data collection phases, enabling attention to be given to specific elements of practicum assessment, without negating the complexity of the whole process.

Interpretivism values research that examines situations through the eyes of the participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The current study was grounded in the experiences of the

participants, as shown in the research objective '*to critically examine the beliefs, perceptions and experiences of the key stakeholders in the assessment of practicum in early childhood initial education*'. Interviews with key participants were the primary source of data and form the basis of understanding the practicum assessment phenomenon.

Goldkuhl (2012, p. 138) proposes that "the core idea of interpretivism is to work with these subjective meanings already there in the social world; that is to acknowledge their existence, to reconstruct them, to understand them, to avoid distorting them, to use them as building-blocks in theorizing". These principles were pivotal to the design and conduct of this research. At each phase of the study emphasis was placed on collecting, analysing and reporting data in a way that respected and honoured the unique perspectives shared by participants.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) suggest that interpretivist research is particularly appealing to the educational researcher for two reasons, both of which were significant to this research. The first is that interpretive research is a good fit for the inherently social context and practice-focused nature of educational settings. In this study, practicum is positioned as a temporary social system, where the key participants come together for the purpose of apprenticeship within a profession. It is intense, purposeful and highly relational and thus requires a research approach that allows for complexity and multiple perspectives. Second, interpretive approaches seek to preserve the integrity of the situation under investigation (Gray, 2004). The assessment of practicum needed to be addressed with validity. To achieve this, the study focused closely on the key participants in the practicum assessment, who could speak directly to assessment practice and the way it was experienced. The choice to include a case study phase that contributed data that was collected in the moment of assessment also enhanced the validity of the study.

In outlining the interpretivist theoretical perspective of the current study, it is acknowledged that data generation is typically co-constructed between the researcher and participants. Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 596) describe research approaches as falling along a continuum from qualitative/quantitative, soft/hard, artistic/scientific. They argue that there is a vast and varied middle ground between the most extreme positions that can yield valuable research possibilities that blend research traditions and practices. The current study falls in the middle realm of these continuums. As the researcher, I designed the research and determined the methods used. I framed the scope of the interviews as well as developing the online survey tool. In doing so, the participants did not have a significant role in co-constructing the study. However, in each phase of the study every effort was made to respect the contribution of participants, and to provide them with the opportunity to share their experiences and express their understandings of practicum assessment, in alignment with interpretivist principles.

This section has overviewed the link between the epistemology and theoretical perspective of the study, and in the following section will examine the link to the methodological framework of the study in greater depth.

3.3. Methodology - the influence of pragmatism in the research design

The pragmatist research tradition is founded upon the principle that the focus of enquiry is seeking the solution to a research problem – with less concern for arguments related to the nature of truth, knowledge and reality (Creswell, 2009). Pragmatism argues that the researcher must be aware of and responsive to the real world conditions in which each study is positioned (Gutek, 2004). In making the methodological decisions for this study, the critical question was whether each decision made sense within the framework of the study, and would ultimately achieve the overall purpose articulated in the research objectives. Was there ‘goodness of fit’ between the intent of the study, the guiding research objectives and the methods employed?

How best could this study yield illuminative data about the actual experiences of a wide and diverse range of participants in the assessment of practicum? In answering these pragmatic questions, it became evident that a mixed methods approach to the study would best provide breadth and depth of data in response to the research objectives. The following section outlines mixed methods research and describes the way in which they have been utilised in the current study.

3.3.1. Mixed methods research

The pragmatic tradition acknowledges the value and ideological nature of research traditions, but adopts a position based on the possible and the practical (Patton, 2002a). This means that in practice, a range of design combinations and formats are considered acceptable and effective in gathering the needed data to address specific research questions (Morgan, 2007), without being seen to sacrifice an ideal of research purity. Flexibility and adaptability are central to a pragmatic approach. Mixed methods research has developed from dissatisfaction among researchers of the limitations presented by exclusive approaches, and an acknowledgement that bias is inherent in any methods of data collection or analysis (Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher & Perez-Prado, 2003). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p. 5) explain that a mixed methods approach to research “focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. The central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone” (p. 5). Greene (2008) proposes that a mixed methods approach to inquiry supports the generation of deeper and broader insights from a wider range of perspectives.

When adopting a mixed methods approach within a pragmatic paradigm, it is essential that the researcher provide explicit justification to support the choices made in shaping the research

design (Creswell, 2009). A mixed methods approach does not imply random or unconsidered choices of method, rather that after due consideration, methods from across the design spectrum are utilised in a sophisticated manner that draws on the strengths of each to best meet the intent and purpose of the study. Mixed methods research is guided by intentionality. Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher and Perez-Prado (2003) argue that it is essential for the researcher to make decisions with explicit acknowledgement of the weaknesses inherent in the design choices, as well as the way in which the use of mixed methods enhances the strengths. The mixed methods utilised in this study were chosen specifically to capture depth of data through interviews and case study, enhanced with breadth of data through the use of an online survey.

Collins, Onwuegbuzie and Sutton (2006) specify four rationales for mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches to research: participant enrichment, instrument fidelity, treatment integrity and significance enhancement (pp. 77-88). For the purposes of this research, participant enrichment and significance enhancement provide the rationale for the choice of mixed methods approach. Participant enrichment reflects the opportunity to optimise the sample by increasing the number of participants. Significance enhancement refers to “mixing qualitative and quantitative techniques in order to maximise the researchers’ interpretation of the data” (Onwuegbuzie, Bustamante & Nelson, 2010, p. 57). Mixed methods approaches acknowledge that quantitative statistical analysis and rich qualitative analysis can together inform and enhance the overall understanding of a given phenomenon.

A mixed methods approach allows the construct of triangulation to be applied within qualitative studies. Traditionally the domain of quantitative paradigms, triangulation is perceived in a different manner in mixed methods research. Rather than being required to prove that the same result can be achieved across situations or time, there is acceptance that triangulation can reveal inconsistency, and that inconsistency is valuable in providing an

“opportunity for developing further insight into relationships between the methods chosen and the phenomenon studied, thus allowing the researcher and the readers of their reports, alike, to improve their understanding of that phenomenon” (Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher & Perez-Prado, 2003, p.20).

3.4. Research methods

This section articulates the decisions that were made that shaped the way in which the study was designed and conducted, and the methods that were utilised. Early in the research journey there was an opportunity to describe the potential study to a colleague. In that discussion I expressed a strong commitment that the study must consider the experiences of all of the key participants in the practicum triad, but also acknowledge that practicum was highly relational, and took place within an institutional context. She encouraged me to read the work of Barbara Rogoff (1984, 1995, 1998, 2003), and in particular her conceptualisation of the planes of analysis. This proved to be a significant step in the research journey, resulting in a framework that guided the research design, analysis and reporting. Initial discussion in this section introduces the work of Barbara Rogoff, and draws upon her understandings of learning within specific cultural contexts to justify the appropriateness of a social constructivist and interpretivist approach to this research. The way in which Rogoff’s (2003) planes of analysis provided a framework for the study is then described and justified, before a description of the QUAL/Quan research design is offered. A brief outline of the multi-phase and mixed methods design is presented.

3.4.1. Barbara Rogoff – an overview

Barbara Rogoff is an innovative North American educational academic whose anthropological research has included considering how children learn in societies which do not have schools. Her research crosses both psychology and anthropology to consider the way in which children

learn and develop within the context of community. The focus of her research is the cultural nature of human development, in particular the development of children in indigenous-heritage communities of the USA, Mexico and Central America in comparison to children of non-indigenous heritage who receive mainstream schooling in the US.

In her book *The Cultural Nature of Human Development*, Rogoff states that her overarching orienting concept is that “humans develop through their changing participation in the socio-cultural activities of their communities, which also change” (2003, p. 11). Development and learning are viewed as culturally determined processes, taking place as a result of observation and participation in shared cultural activities and practices. Rogoff’s key theoretical ideas centre around development as transformation of participation in socio-cultural activity and the significance of learning through observing and pitching in (Rogoff, 2014), attending to personal, interpersonal and cultural processes.

3.4.1.1. Practicum as the site of participation, transformation and culturally mediated learning

Rogoff’s writings are predicated on the belief that learning occurs as the result of participation in the events and practices of specific cultural communities. Drawing from the theories of Lev Vygotsky, development is seen to occur as people learn to use cultural tools for thinking, with the help of those who are more experienced in both the tools and cultural institutions. Rogoff (2003, p. 236) argues that understanding of development requires “attention to how people come to understand their world through active participation in shared endeavours as they engage in sociocultural activities”. As previously described, the nature and intent of the practicum as typically enacted in New Zealand initial teacher education (Kane, 2003) is for student teachers to be placed in an early childhood setting for a given period of time, to observe and experience the way in which teaching and learning occurs in these settings, but

also to become an active contributor in order to develop and transform their own teaching practices. The nature of practicum in initial teacher education is developmental in nature, as student teachers are supported to move along a continuum from novice to experienced practitioner (Field, 2002). Rogoff (2003, p. 254) further suggests that as a person participates in an activity, they change in order to respond to the situation at hand, “in ways that contribute to both the on-going event and to the person’s preparation for involvement in other similar events”, resonating with the role of practicum in seeking transformation for the present as well as future teaching roles.

Socio-cultural theories position the learner as a mutually engaged participant in community endeavours (Rogoff, 2014, Wenger, 1998). Community can be defined in terms of different orienting factors such as ethnicity, religion, location, but the key feature must be “some common and continuing organisation, values, understanding, history and practices” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 80). Rogoff argues for an understanding of culture as more than static ethnic categories, with greater attention to people’s participation in cultural practices - their ways of living with their community. Rather than focusing on membership in categorical groupings, for example ethnicity, Rogoff argues that it is more important to attend to the way in which people participate in a given community, and the way in which cultural tools serve to mediate participation and learning.

During practicum, student teachers become part of the social and cultural community of the early childhood setting. Rogoff defines communities in relation to characteristics such as shared communication, stability of involvement, a degree of commitment, mutual goal accomplishment and shared (sometimes contested) meaning (Rogoff, 2003). All of these features are evident in the practicum relationship. For a given period of time the student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator come together to achieve a mutual goal,

requiring collaboration, communication and a degree of trust and openness in the giving and receiving of feedback. In adopting (and adapting) Rogoff's work within the context of this study, the practicum is positioned as a site of professional and personal learning, and the practicum relationships as a temporary community. When viewed this way, the principles that Rogoff applies to learning and development in other contexts can provide a valid framework for consideration of practicum and its assessment.

Central to Rogoff's proposal that learning and development are a result of changing participation in cultural activities is the notion of guided participation. Guided participation is viewed as both the instructional and informal ways that the learner is guided by more able and experienced others within the community. This may include direct instruction and passing on of knowledge, skill or information, but more frequently encompasses the side-by-side situations in which the learner participates in the values, experiences and practices of the community. There is a clear resonance here to the way in which practicum experiences position the student teacher within early childhood communities for the purpose of engaging in meaningful community practices and learning through the direct and indirect support (guided participation) of others in the setting. The role of the associate teacher is that of the more able and experienced community member who is able to guide, through feedback and modelling, the expected practices of that early childhood community.

Rogoff's more recent writings have focused on the significant role of learning by observing and pitching in (LOPI) which builds upon the understandings of apprenticeship and guided participation previously discussed. Through observing and then pitching in to cultural endeavours, the learner develops an expanding repertoire of practices within the context of feedback and guidance from other community members. Rogoff (2014) positions LOPI as a means of learning that stands in counterpoint to traditional 'assembly-line' learning models

which focus on learner's attention, motivation and behaviour, often in ways that are individualistic and isolated from relevant community practices and endeavours. The notion of 'observing and pitching in' can be seen to have ready application to the role of practicum in learning to teach. The nature of practicum is such that the student teacher is given the opportunity to move out from the formal learning setting, and to engage in a meaningful way with an established community of practice (Wenger, 1998). During practicum they are expected to observe the existing practices, and then to take a role in enacting these practices themselves, in increasingly competent and appropriate ways. Exposure to a range of practicum experiences supports student teachers to develop an extended repertoire of teaching practices. The community learning based nature of LOPI may be particularly valuable for student teachers in early childhood practicum settings, as they engage not only with the nominated associate teacher, but also the wider teaching team, and the children and families in the centre community. Within the practicum listening and observing are seen as valuable agents of learning for the student teacher, and they are actively encouraged to notice, learn and contribute to the practices within the early childhood setting.

In relation to assessment practices, Rogoff suggests that each community applies value judgements in determining goals for learning, endpoints of development, methods of supporting development and assessment of progress over time, and argues that "the designation of certain goals.... as more sophisticated or important than others is itself a cultural process worthy of study" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 252). This contention supports the focus of the current study in investigating the way in which institutional and interpersonal cultural factors shape the way in which practicum assessment is enacted and experienced by those involved. The design of the study is crafted to capture the significant elements across the three planes of analysis, allowing for consideration of the cultural practices, values and expectations that shape the practicum assessment experience.

3.4.1.2. Planes of analysis

Rogoff (2003) proposed that learning occurs within the complex interplay of predictable contextual factors, which she called 'planes': the subjective (intrapersonal), the interpersonal and the institutional (community/cultural). In drawing on Rogoff's work, it is her conceptualisation of these planes of analysis that proved most influential to the current study (Rogoff, 2003). Nuttall and Edwards (2007) explain that Rogoff (2003) builds upon the foundational work of socio-cultural theorist Lev Vygotsky in acknowledging the significance of interpersonal and intrapersonal planes, but further adding the significance of the institutional plane in shaping development. Rogoff (1995) argues that it is not possible to effectively understand development if it is isolated from the cultural context and community in which it occurs.

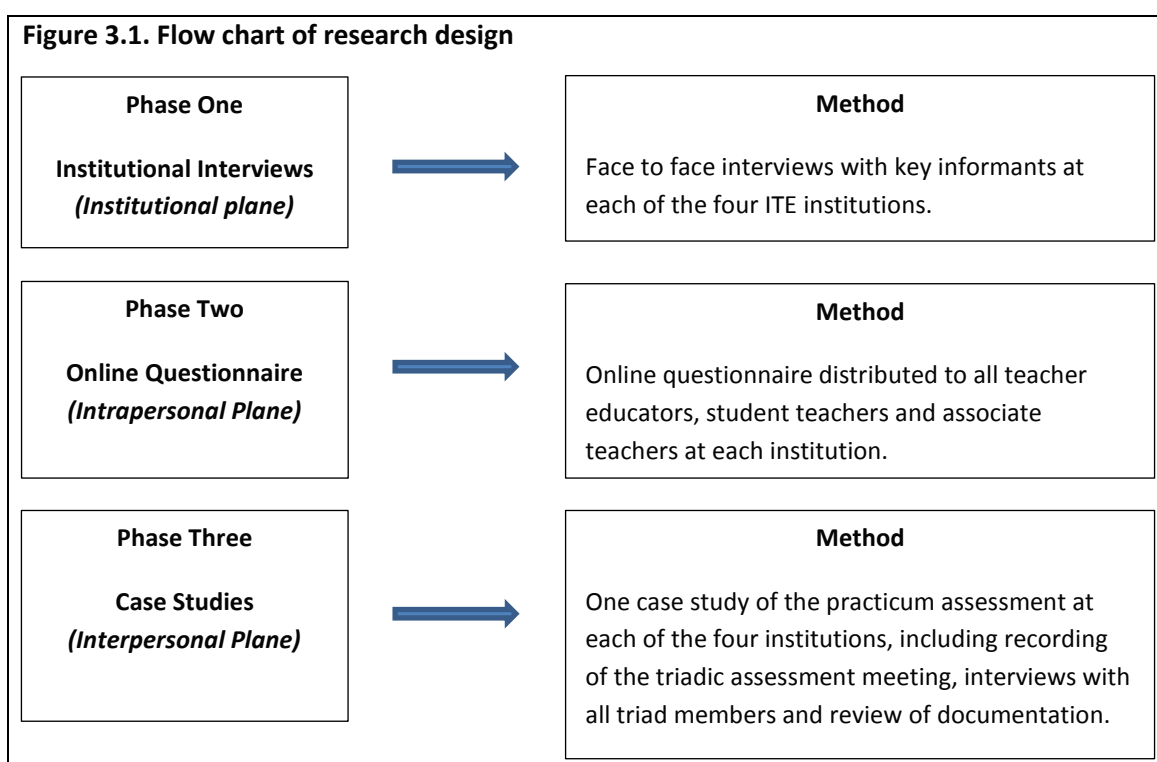
The use of Rogoff's planes of analysis was chosen as the organising theoretical framework of the present study due to the strong resonance between Rogoff's conceptualisation of learning and development and the practicum experience. This approach also allowed the assessment of practicum to be considered as a whole, highlighting cultural and contextual variables at work. To only consider the perspective of the student teacher, would be to negate the influence of both the institutional practices and interpersonal relationships in shaping the practicum experience and the assessment that takes place. Rogoff's work alerts me as a researcher to the need to attend to the cultural values and practices at play.

Rogoff's planes of analysis (2003) allow for a complex situation to be investigated through the foregrounding of specific elements. Foregrounding is described as the process of focusing on one dimension, while the other dimensions are maintained in the background. One plane of analysis is not considered more or less important within this study. Each plane is equally significant; to attend to them separately it is only to foreground one plane in the moment, so

that it may be given due consideration. Bringing one element into focus is not to suggest that it can be effectively considered in isolation. The practicum experience is highly complex and multi-faceted, with intricate connections of relationships and practices (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Haigh & Ell, 2014). However, while it is important to see the reality of practicum as a complex whole, it is also this very complexity that requires the opportunity for it to be unpacked into components that are manageable enough to allow some inferences and understanding to be gathered.

3.4.2. Overview of research design

The theoretical framework of Rogoff's planes (2003) guided the methodological design of the research, with each phase of the research developed to foreground a specific plane. Figure 3.1 illustrates the three phases of the study and the way in which they align to Rogoff's planes.



Phase One involved personal interviews with 'key informants' in the represented teacher education institutions. A key informant approach was adopted in consideration of Rogoff's

articulation of the importance of experts within a given community (Rogoff, 2003), and their ability to speak with some authority to cultural values and practices. These interviews gathered data as to institutional expectations, beliefs and practices related to the assessment of practicum and sought to understand the rationale that guided the way institutions conceptualised the assessment of practicum, and determined the practices that would be enacted.

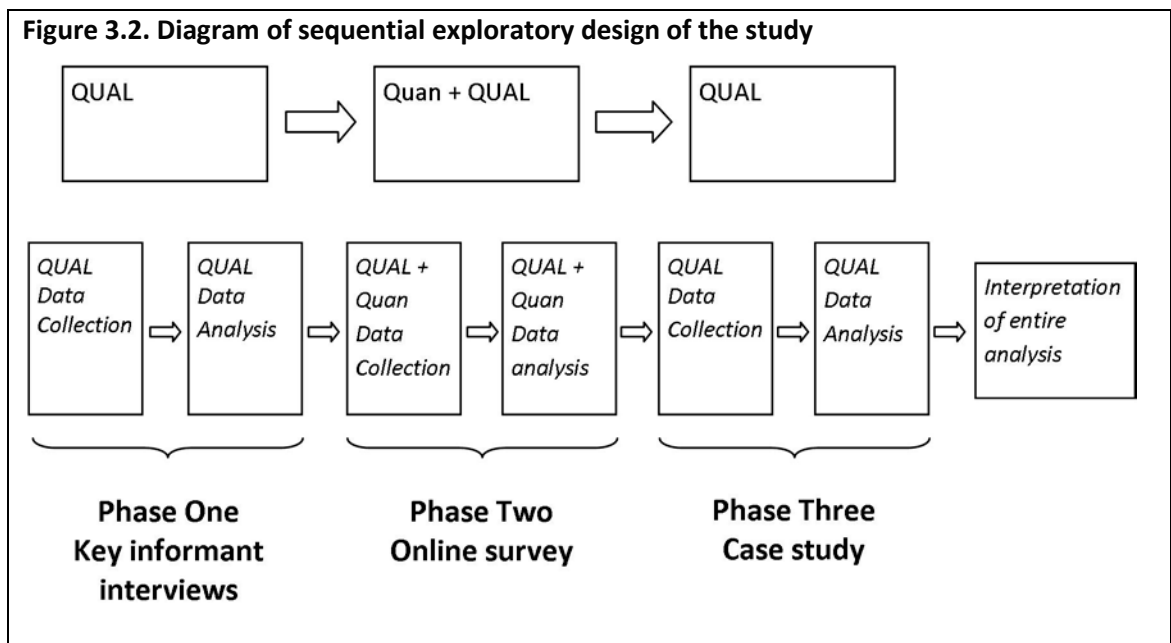
Phase Two utilised an online survey of student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators to garner self-reports about beliefs, practices and experiences related to the assessment of practicum. This phase reflected the individual plane of Rogoff's theory (2003), as participants were able to express their own stories, and the personal factors that were significant to the way they experienced and made meaning of practicum assessment.

Phase Three of the study utilised case studies of practicum triads to provide data in relation to the interpersonal plane. The purpose of these case studies was to understand the interaction between the participants of the practicum and to consider the way in which the relationships between the student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator are manifest in practicum assessment.

Each phase of the research yielded valuable information in its own right, but the richness and strength of the study was enhanced when data from each of the three phases was considered together, to provide a broader understanding of practicum assessment on multiple levels. The three planes of analysis have also provided the framework for data analysis, and the structure and presentation of the results in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

3.4.3. Sequential exploratory design

The current study follows a QUAL/quant sequential exploratory design, in which the qualitative data is used to assist in the interpretation of quantitative findings, with a focus on exploring a phenomenon (Creswell, 2003). Figure 3.2 provides a visual representation of the way in which qualitative and quantitative elements are weighted in the current study. Mixed methods approaches do not require equal weighting be placed on qualitative and quantitative elements (Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher & Perez-Prado, 2003). This study has adopted a predominantly qualitative approach, as guided by the epistemological positioning of the research and the nature of the research objectives. However, the inclusion of quantitative methods was seen to enrich the study through expanding on qualitative findings (Creswell, 2003), supporting triangulation and the offering greater potential to draw inferences.



As Figure 3.2 illustrates, Phase One of the study was exclusively qualitative. Data collection methods involved in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key informants in each institution. Analysis was also qualitative, using a thematic approach to determine key ideas and concepts expressed by participants. Phase Two blended qualitative and quantitative data collection

methods within an online survey. Analysis continued to look for key themes, but quantitative data allowed for descriptive statistical analysis that supported fuller interpretation. Phase Three was also exclusively qualitative. Interviews were the primary source of data, although transcripts of the assessment meeting, and associated assessment documentation were important data sources in providing a fuller picture of assessment in practice. These additional data sources were also analysed qualitatively, in reference to the key themes of the study.

Phase One and Phase Three of the study access only a small group of participants. The inclusion of the online survey in Phase Two allowed access to the population of student teachers, teacher educators and associate teachers affiliated with the programme. Access to a larger sample gave additional breadth to the data collected. Reviewers such as Kane (2005) and Cameron and Baker (2004) indicate that many of the published studies conducted in the area of practicum have been small-scale, reflective and evaluative in nature, offering 'snapshots' of practice in a range of settings. In the design of the current study, the potential to gather data on a larger scale was seen to be a valuable contribution to the field, through analysis of the similarities and differences in practice across a representative range of institutions. The use of quantitative analysis of the Phase Two online survey was seen to enhance the understanding of the key informant interviews and case studies, as well as allowing for validation across the three phases.

This section has provided a very brief overview of the design of the current study. Full description of the sample, data collection and analysis procedures for each phase of the study are provided in the preface to the following three chapters, which present the results for each phase of the research design. The following discussion will provide justification for the choice of data-gathering methods utilised in the study.

3.5. Justification of methods

3.5.1. Key informant interviews

The key informant technique draws from ethnographic research approaches, but is a valuable tool for research in other social science investigations. Marshall (1996) reviews the technique, as well as the advantages and disadvantages to be considered by the researcher adopting this approach. Key informants are defined as those who “as a result of their personal skills or position within a society, are able to provide more information and a deeper insight” (Marshall, 1996, p. 92). The informant’s role in the community of study is the key criteria for eligibility, although Marshall (1996) notes that knowledge, willingness, communicability and impartiality are also important factors to be considered in selecting key informants. The main benefit of adopting a key informant approach is the quality of data that is able to be obtained from one source, in a short period of time, as well as the level of community knowledge that informants are able to share. Potential disadvantages of this approach include poor selection of informants which does not yield the data sought, or difficulty in status and relationship between the researcher and the key informant. Key informants may not always represent the majority view of the community, and may have personal agendas, which need to be considered in subsequent analysis (Marshall, 1996).

A key informant method was chosen for this study as a means of capturing institutional knowledge that would not be available from the other participants in the study. In adopting Rogoff’s (2003) planes of analysis as the framework for this study, it was important to select a research method that enabled access to data in the institutional plane. Interviewing key informants was seen as an effective way to attend to the institutional domain in a meaningful and valid way. These key informants would be able to describe the policies and procedures that govern practicum assessment within the institution, as well as provide understanding of the rationale for these decisions.

3.5.1.1. A general interview guide approach

Patton (2002a) defines three possible approaches that may be adopted in a qualitative interview: the informal conversational interview, the general interview guide approach and the standardised open-ended interview. For the purposes of the current study a general interview guide approach was adopted. In this approach the researcher outlines the set of topics to be explored in the interview in advance, but the order of the interview, and the wording of questions is not specified. The interviewer makes decisions during the course of the interview in response to the way the interview unfolds. The strengths of this approach are that established topics provide a systematic framework across participants, while still allowing flexibility and responsiveness to the individual. Key areas can be identified, and potential gaps anticipated (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). These authors also highlight that this approach allows interviews to remain “conversational and situational” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 200), which was seen to be valuable in the context of the current study.

3.5.2. Surveys

Phase Two of the study made use of an online survey to access the population groups of student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators in each institution. Hewson and Laurent (2008) summarise the key benefits of using an online survey over traditional methods. Time and cost-effectiveness, as well as the opportunity to quickly access a large and geographically diverse population are seen as key advantages. Online surveys may foster increased candour due to the anonymity and perceived distance of the online format, and also reduce social desirability effects. Hewson and Laurent (2008) further suggest that online surveys may empower participants who may not be as open in other research methods. The functionality of data collection and analysis tools with the online survey programme was also a key factor in choosing this approach within the current study.

There are some acknowledged limitations to online survey methods. Vehovar and Manfreda (2008) state that invited participants may choose not to participate at all, may complete a selective range of questions, or may terminate the survey at any point without completing. Attracting participants through email invitations can also be problematic, as invitations may not be delivered correctly, or may be treated as spam. Recipients must also see the value in the study in choosing to follow the link. Response rates are likely to be higher when surveys targeted to specific groups (Vehovar & Manfreda, 2008).

3.5.3. Case study

Verschuren's (2003, p. 137) description of case study is useful in justifying the choice of case study as an appropriate methodology to respond to the complexity of practicum assessment. He states:

A case study is a research strategy that can be qualified as holistic in nature, following an iterative-parallel way of preceding, looking at only a few strategically selected cases, observed in their natural context in an open-ended way, explicitly avoiding (all variants of) tunnel vision, making use of analytical comparison of cases or sub-cases, and aimed at description and explanation of complex and entangled group attributes, patterns, structures or processes.

A case study design was selected for Phase Three of the study as a means of capturing data at the actual point of practicum. The other phases encouraged participants to reflect on and report their prior experiences, whereas this phase was more immediate. A case study design allowed for multiple points of data collection within the one case. This design was also adopted as a means of bringing the assessment of practicum to life, providing a forum where a story could be told and a tool by which the study could capture some understanding of the

way in which the relationship between the participants was enacted and experienced (Tight, 2010). The case study was the final piece of the triangulation structure, allowing consideration of how the experiences of the case study triads affirmed or challenged the policies and practices identified in the institutional key informant interviews, and the self-reports of assessment experiences generated in responses to the survey.

Yin (2003) suggests that the case study design may be conceptualised along two dichotomous dimensions: single- or multiple-case; holistic or embedded. For this purposes of this research, a multiple case design has been adopted, albeit with only one case from each institution, and is embedded, in its selected focus on the assessment process, rather than the entire practicum.

One of the criticisms levelled at case study research is concern over generalisation of individual cases to larger population groups. In conducting a case study, there is no intent to generalise, but rather to enhance the exploratory and illuminatory nature of this study. Stake (1995, p. 8) argues that “the real business of case study is particularisation, not generalisation”. In selecting only one case study from each institution there was the potential for criticism as to representativeness – would that one triad reflect the experiences of others? Whose voice and experience would be privileged (Diefenbach, 2009)? However, it can be argued that the multi-phase approach taken, and in particular the online survey phase, serves in some way to mitigate such concerns.

3.5.4. Triangulation of research methods

Triangulation refers to “convergence and corroboration of results from different methods when studying the same phenomenon” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p.439). In utilising a range of methods within a multi-phase study, the intent is to support triangulation of data. The following three chapters present the results of the study phase by phase, but in Chapter Seven, results across all three sets of data are examined as a whole in answering the research

question and responding to the research objectives. Discussion in Chapter Seven addresses triangulation, in considering the way in which the findings of each phase corroborated or challenged each other. Triangulation is seen to support the credibility of the research findings, as a measure of validity in qualitative research (Toma, 2006). Each phase of the study offers a different perspective of the assessment of practicum; institutional, personal and relational, and triangulation offers the potential to consider alignment or dissonance in the data.

3.6. Justification of analysis – thematic analysis

The amount of data collected in this study was extensive. The multi-site, multiple phase nature of the study presented a range of options and challenges in relation to analysis and presentation of findings. The choice was made to adopt a thematic approach to the analysis and presentation of results, in order to provide a cohesive thread that would run through the chapters of the thesis, and would support final interpretation. The development of themes is a subjective and interpretive process, influenced by the researcher's beliefs and values (Punch, 2009). It is acknowledged that other interpretations were possible; however, the clear resonance with the literature, as well as the consistency of themes across the multiple dimensions of the study added strength to decision making.

Table 3.1 provides an overview of the themes that were used in analysing and presenting the data throughout the thesis. The first iteration of this list of themes was generated in response to the research objectives. In looking at each objective, potential topics were noted that would need to be considered in meeting the objectives. Reading widely from the literature review served to further shape the identified themes, affirming existing themes and identifying others for consideration. This list provided the starting point for the analysis process, which continued to be generative. Each piece of data was considered against existing themes, and new themes generated if required. The following list presents the final list of themes that thread through the chapters of the study.

Table 3.1*Thematic overview*

Focus	Key themes	Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
Assessment Philosophy	Conceptual framework	•		
	Place of practicum in the ITE programme	•		
	Standards based assessment	•		
	Purpose of assessment	•	•	•
	Assessment principles	•	•	
Assessment Practices	Triadic meeting	•	•	•
	Observation	•	•	•
	Documentation	•	•	•
	Use of criteria	•	•	•
	Goal setting and reflection	•	•	•
	Self-assessment	•	•	•
	Feedback	•	•	•
	Decision making	•	•	•
	Grading	•	•	•
	Failing students	•	•	
	Moderation	•	•	
	Induction and Professional development	•	•	
Assessment Challenges	Cost	•	•	
	Workload	•	•	
	Bias	•	•	
	Quality settings	•	•	
	Shared expectations	•	•	
	Relationships and conflict	•	•	
	Disagreement in assessment outcome	•	•	
Authentic Assessment	Relational factors	•	•	•
	Structural factors	•	•	•
Assessment in the context of relationships	The triadic relationship	•	•	•
	The ST/AT, TE/AT and ST/TE dyads	•	•	•
	Role of the triad members	•	•	•
	Power in relationships	•	•	•
	Use of silence	•	•	•

3.7. Selection of research sites

In the initial stages of this research I was a full-time student based in the Auckland region. The original application to the Ethics Committee proposed ITE providers within the greater Auckland area, as they offered a diverse range of provision options, as well as ease of access for data collection. In January 2011, a move to the Manawatu region to take up a position as lecturer at Massey University necessitated a review of potential research sites. One of the original proposed sites had been Massey University; however it became evident that this was no longer going to be an appropriate site for my research, due to my involvement in teaching and assessment in the domain of practicum.

A list of all institutions in New Zealand offering a three-year early childhood initial teacher education programme was collated and an analysis of their features was undertaken, including delivery options, type of provider, and special characteristics. A purposive sample of five providers was then selected, on the basis of gaining a range of institutions (University, Private Training Establishment, Polytechnic), delivery options (field-based, face to face, distance, combination) and ease of accessibility to the research site. Participation of Māori medium initial teacher education providers was not sought, stemming from a belief that my own identity as a European/Pakeha woman, who was not fluent in Te Reo Māori, meant that I was not an appropriate researcher in this setting.

The initial approach to potential research sites was via email to the programme leaders of the early childhood programmes at each proposed institution to determine whether there was an interest in participation in the research and to seek guidance as to the protocol to follow in seeking access to each institution. An information sheet was attached to each email that outlined the nature of the study and the desired contribution from each institution (see Appendix A). A positive response was received from four of the five institutions, with

comments indicating that the research was considered valuable and timely. One institution declined at this stage for the reason that a pending programme change would impact on the continuity of data that could be collected. The list of nationwide providers was revisited to source another potential research site, with similar characteristics, and the programme leader was contacted. This provider also agreed to participate. Despite an initial favourable response, the fifth institution did not reply to any subsequent contact (both by phone and email, on multiple occasions) and so it was decided not to pursue this contact. Due to time constraints (and how long the negotiation with each institution was taking) it was decided at this point to proceed with the four providers, as this would still provide an extensive range of data across the three phases, and the range of provider characteristics was satisfied.

In the final composition of research sites, a range of initial teacher education institutions was achieved, including a University, Polytechnic and two Private Training Establishments, one of which had a special character. Each offered a three year Bachelor level qualification leading to teacher registration. The research sites represented the variety of study modes that is typical in early childhood initial teacher education, including face to face, distance (online), field based and mixed-mode offerings. In order to protect the identity of the participating institutions in line with the ethical commitment of the study, more specific identifying features have not been presented.

3.8. Positioning as a researcher

An interpretivist research approach requires that the researcher consider and account for their role in the research process (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The researcher is seen as an active contributor to the research, through the actions and decisions made. In this research journey I found that my understanding of my role as a researcher was to shift significantly as a result of my experiences.

In my initial conceptualisation of the study, I envisaged myself as an outsider conducting research, as I did not hold a role within each of the institutions. However, it became apparent during the first key informant interview that I did in fact hold insider status (Hockey, 1993), due to my knowledge of, and participation in the teacher education community. The informants and I had a mutual understanding and experience of involvement in the assessment of practicum. Roland and Wicks (2009) argue that such shared understanding supports meaningful interviewing and accurate presentation of responses. On reflection, it became apparent that holding insider status played a pivotal role in supporting access to institutions, the shaping of the questions asked, and establishing a relationship and rapport that allowed the openness of the dialogue that was shared (Gunasekare, 2007; Hockey, 1993). Shared understanding of practicum allowed me to understand terminology used, experiences reported, and the context of issues, without requiring detailed elaboration. Gunasekara (2007) identified the same outcome in his research in academia, in which his prior understanding and experience helped him to interpret the shared language, and translate information that was expressed in the 'code' of that community. However, he also alerts the potential for concern when this occurs, as interviewees may not be as fulsome in their responses, relying on their assumption of the researcher's tacit knowledge, as well as temptation on the part of the researcher to 'fill in the gaps'. While I was cognisant of not imputing my own experience and interpretation onto the reports of participants, or filling in knowledge, I do acknowledge in the limitations of the study (see Chapter Eight) that interviewees, particularly the key informants, may not have expressed as much detail in their descriptions due to the assumption that I would have tacit knowledge of the experience.

The potential for ethical and professional tension was eased in this study as a result of the actual level of insider engagement. Hockey (1993, p. 207, *italics in original*) clarifies this in suggesting that different levels of engagement can bring different advantages and problems:

“*general* knowledge of an area or culture is an advantage in developing rapport and gaining entry. On the other hand, *particular* knowledge of and by the research community may cause problems, not least that of the researcher being allocated particular roles which are restrictive for research purposes”. In relation to this study, my engagement was at the general knowledge level related to teacher education and practicum, not particular to the individual institutions.

The early childhood teacher education community in New Zealand is small, and so with each interviewee I often found a professional connection. Some I had met before at sector events, with others the connection was simply the connection of a shared role as a fellow teacher educator. As Hockey (1993, p. 204) states, “*a priori* knowledge of the situation endows a social and psychological understanding which allows the researcher a degree of naturalness in interaction, a feature that foster rapport with informants”. This *a priori* knowledge was valuable in being able to conduct the interview in a more conversational manner. There was, at times, a mutual sharing of experiences, which on reflection was valuable as a means of deepening and extending some of the information being shared. Eide and Kahn (2008) suggest that at times such acts of self-disclosure serve to level the playing field between the researcher and participant, and that the sharing of the researcher's story can call forth the stories of the other. Immediately following the interviews I was concerned that I may have entered into the interview too much. However, as I read further about the notion of interviewing as conversation and dialogue (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Roland & Wicks, 2009) understanding of my role began to shift and I came to see my voice and presence in the interview in a more positive light. Roland and Wicks (2009, p. 253) suggest that “through the conversation, the researcher gains new self-understanding and uncovers taken-for-granted values. Likewise, the informant is given the opportunity to reflect upon, articulate and clarify particular practices and values hitherto taken for granted as natural elements of the informant’s culture”.

3.9. Ethical considerations

An ethics application for this study was approved by Massey University Human Ethics Committee in November 2010 (see Appendix B). In 2011 a minor amendment to the application was noted, in declaring that I had been employed as a Lecturer at Massey University, and therefore would not proceed with the intention to use Massey University as one of the representative institutions (see Appendix C). The process of gaining access to each of the four institutions also required submission of a full application to the Ethics Committee at each institution, along with evidence of approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. This was a comprehensive process. The formal approval letters from each institution are held by the researcher, but are not included as appendices in order to maintain the anonymity of the participating institutions.

The development of an ethics application was an opportunity to deeply consider the practicalities of the research and the potential ramifications. In conducting the research, it was important that the research not be harmful in any way to participants, but that moreover, that engagement in the research would be beneficial. The ethics application was a way to articulate the importance and value of the research, as well as to document the way in which stakeholders would be treated ethically and appropriately.

The nature of this research was such that it was unlikely to cause any harm to intended participants, and full disclosure was both possible and appropriate. The need for informed consent (Johnson & Christensen, 2012) was addressed through detailed information sheets (see Appendix A, D, E and F), and participants in Phase One and Three were required to sign consent forms prior to data collection (see Appendices G and H). In Phase Two, submission of the online survey was deemed to imply consent, due to the anonymous nature of the study. The most significant ethical issues to be addressed related to ensuring the anonymity of the

institutions involved, access to contact information for potential participants, and preserving the rights of participants in the case studies.

3.9.1. Access to participants

The privacy of individuals was a paramount consideration in the current study, which raised challenges as to how to access particular participant groups. It was evident that I would need to rely on the institutions to serve as my intermediary in order to protect the privacy of participants. For this reason, in the initial approach to the institutions I outlined my request that institution would select the key informant, distribute the invitation for the online survey, and nominate the triad for the case studies. This enabled the privacy of all contact details of participants to be maintained, until they had given permission for those details to be shared.

3.9.2. Institutional anonymity

Anonymity was an important ethical consideration, in order that participating institutions did not feel they were being exposed or criticised, and in order for participants to feel that they could freely discuss their practicum experiences, both positive and negative. The challenges related to anonymity were addressed within the ethics application presented to each institution, highlighting the fact that the early childhood ITE sector in New Zealand is quite small, and readers could potentially make inferences regarding the identity of participating institutions. Information sheets provided to institutions (see Appendix A) expressed a commitment that to the greatest extent possible, no identifying information would be included in the thesis or other dissemination of data. Participants were assured that pseudonyms and coding would be used to identify the institutions and individuals throughout the study. Features that were considered to provide too much identifiable information were excluded from the study. This approach was felt to be a good fit with the intention that the study be exploratory and illuminative rather than evaluative of any one provider's specific

practices. Institutions were also not made aware in any way of the identity of other providers participating in the research.

3.9.3. Protecting the rights of case study participants

The case study was the most potentially vulnerable phase of the research, as it pertained directly to assessment outcomes for the student teacher. Participants were informed in the initial consent process that they could ask for the recording to be ceased, and for me to leave the meeting, at any point. This right was reiterated at the start of each assessment triadic meeting, and again at the outset of the interviews. Initial selection of the case study also asked institutions to select students who were not considered at risk of failing, in order to protect potentially vulnerable students. I also exercised my own judgement as a researcher and teacher educator to evaluate risk throughout the data collection of this phase.

3.10. Summary

This chapter has described the methodological framework within which the study has been conducted. The epistemological beliefs central to the study have been articulated, and the rationale for the methodological and design decisions provided. Table 3.2 is provided to offer a visual summary of the multiple phases of the research, and the specific design elements relevant to each stage, to serve as a quick reference guide. The following three chapters present the findings of the study. As the preface to each of these chapters, a brief description of the sample, data collection and data analysis procedures specific to each phase of the study have been provided, to set the context for the results which follow.

Table 3.2*Overview of the research design*

	Phase One Key Informant Interviews	Phase Two Questionnaire	Phase Three Case Studies
Timeline	August- October 2011	October 2011 – May 2012	July – September 2012
Focus	Institutional practices and policy	Individual perceptions and experiences of student teachers, associate Teachers and teacher Educators	Actual experience of practicum assessment, including the relationships between practicum participants.
Key Research Objectives	To critically examine how a representative sample of New Zealand teacher education providers assess student practicum.	<p>To critically examine the beliefs, perceptions and experiences of the key stakeholders in the practicum experience at five institutions representing a range of approaches to teacher education and practicum in New Zealand.</p> <p>To identify the factors which create authentic assessment of students' teaching practice during practicum.</p>	
Research Methods	<p>Guided topic interviews, face to face.</p> <p>Participants given questions prior to interview</p>	<p>Questionnaire/Survey – to all participants of practicum within the institutions</p> <p>Online survey using Survey Monkey.</p> <p>Mix of closed and open questions. Some rating scales and belief assessments.</p>	Case studies – including: guided interviews (post-assessment meeting), recording of assessment meeting, and analysis of documentation.
Participants	Key informant at four representative institutions, chosen on the basis of the different approaches and delivery of teacher education.	<p>All students within the three year early childhood initial teacher education programme.</p> <p>All teacher educators within the relevant programme who are involved in practicum assessment.</p> <p>All associate teachers who support student in the relevant ITE programme.</p>	One case study from each institution, including a student teacher in the third year of their study, their teacher educator and associate teacher.

<i>Analysis of Data</i>	<p>Foregrounding of institutional plane. Focus on analysis of institution policies and practices within the institution.</p> <p>Qualitative thematic analysis, addressing key topics</p>	<p>Foregrounding of the personal/intrapersonal plane. Focus on analysis of individual experience.</p> <p>Qualitative thematic analysis of open-ended questions. Descriptive statistical analysis of quantitative questions</p>	<p>Foregrounding of the interpersonal plane – considering the way in which the assessment is enacted in the context of relationships.</p> <p>Qualitative thematic analysis, addressing key topics</p>
<i>Role of the researcher</i>	<p>Interviewer – personal but formal contact with participants. Developer of potential interview topics. Informed outsider.</p>	<p>Developer of questionnaire. Distant contact with participants through instrument. Informed outsider.</p>	<p>Interviewer/observer. Personal but formal contact with participants. Developer of potential interview topics. Informed outsider.</p>
<i>Justification</i>	<p>It is not possible to fully understand a given situation without understanding the social and contextual factors that govern the way in which practices are manifest in a given institution/community (Rogoff, 2003). Focus on illumination and exploration, not comparison. Descriptive intent. Interviews selected as a means of gathering rich data, and allowing for clarification and expansion of data (Cohen, et al., 2002),</p>	<p>Recognises the importance of the story of the individual, but in choosing a large scale survey seeks as many stories as possible to allow some inferences to be drawn. May gather less rich data due to the physical constraints of a questionnaire (Cohen, et al., 2002).</p>	<p>Important to gain an illustration of actual practise as it happens and to see if this matches self-reports and reflections – how these might be coloured, cleaned up perhaps? Gathers data in the moment. Rich data collection using multiple sources to flesh it out (Cohen, et al., 2002). Most complete picture on a macro-level. Allows examination of the dynamic relationship between participants (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).</p>

Ethical Considerations			
Anonymity/ Confidentiality	Institutions made aware that details of the programme practicum component may give an indication as to the identity, but that in presenting results effort is made to minimise identifiable features. Pseudonyms used throughout.	Questionnaires are anonymous. No identifying features collected. Results grouped according to institutional data sets for analysis purposes.	Identity of triadic members not disclosed. Pseudonyms used throughout.
Data usage	Data used only for disclosed purpose; the completion of PhD requirements and subsequent publications		
Risk to participants	Minimal risk is apparent. Participants had control over disclosure, to minimise risk of commercial sensitivity concerns	No apparent risk due to anonymity.	No risk to participants as I had no position of influence in the institutions involved, or direct involvement in assessment outcome
Informed Consent	Full disclosure to participants of all components and anticipated outcomes of the study		
Conflict of interest	No evident conflict of interest. No professional roles in relation to the programmes involved		

Chapter Four - The Institutional Plane

4.1. Introduction

The assessment of practicum takes place within the parameters of institutional policy and practice. While it is enacted and experienced by individual participants, the institution provides the regulatory system that shapes the practicum experience in both explicit and tacit ways.

This chapter presents the findings of Phase One of the study, with a focus on the institutional plane. Findings directly address research objective one and three:

1. *to critically examine how a representative sample of New Zealand initial teacher education institutions assess early childhood practicum; and*
3. *to identify the factors that support authentic assessment of student teachers' practice during practicum.*

This chapter begins with an overview of the sample, data collection and data analysis procedures, and then presents the results of the interviews with key informants in each of the institutions, according to key themes.

4.2. Description of methods

4.2.1. Sample

Each of the four representative institutions was asked to nominate a 'key informant'; a person who would have the knowledge and experience to be able to speak on behalf of the institution in relation to the policies and practices surrounding the assessment of practicum. Each institution had a unique organisational and leadership structure, therefore the request for a key informant did not stipulate a specific role, but requested to interview the person within the three-year early childhood initial teacher education degree who would have the knowledge to address questions related to the policy and practices of practicum assessment in this programme.

The final sample included a total of six participants, as two institutions requested that two informants be interviewed, to address different areas of knowledge or expertise. The informants held different positions within the institutions, although all held a position of leadership, either in the overall ITE programme, or in practicum. Once identified by the institution, each potential key informant was provided with an information sheet that described the study, the nature of their participation, and their rights as participants (see Appendix D). Written consent was received from each informant prior to data collection (see Appendix G).

4.2.2. Data collection

The method used for this phase of the study was a qualitative interview, using a general interview guide approach in which topics were pre-prepared, but the order and nature of questions was determined during the course of the interview (See Appendix I). The purpose of this phase of the data collection was to gain an understanding of the institutional context in which practicum assessment occurred. The intention was to understand the practices and processes that guided the assessment process, as well as the philosophy and policy that underpinned these actions.

The interviews were conducted between August and October, 2011. A suitable time and place for the interview was negotiated with each key informant. Each interview was held at the informant's place of work, as per their request. The key informants were provided with a copy of potential interview topics (see Appendix I) prior to the interview, to allow time for reflection as well as to source additional information that may have been needed. These topics were generated within the framework provided by the research objectives, and were informed by the literature review and my own knowledge and experience.

Each interview took approximately one, to one and half hours. Effort was made to keep the interviews within the intended timeframes in awareness of the workload and other commitments of participants. At times this required a decision to conclude an interview, even when there were further potential areas of discussion. More time with the key informants may have yielded greater information regarding the rationale for assessment practices; however it was necessary to balance the needs of the study with the needs of participants.

Each interview began with an explanation of the study and the opportunity for the key informants to ask any questions they had. Their consent to be interviewed and recorded was confirmed, and the right to cease the interview at any point reiterated. With the permission of participants, all interviews were digitally audio-recorded, and subsequently professionally transcribed. The transcription process raised an unanticipated issue, when the transcriber had difficulty interpreting some of the terminology used. Each interview was therefore listened to and corrected to ensure accuracy. This proved valuable, in increasing familiarity with the raw data which supported subsequent analysis. Transcriptions were then returned to participants for review. They were informed that this was an opportunity to check for accuracy, as well as to offer any clarification that they felt was needed. Each key informant approved their transcript and signed a transcript release (see Appendix J).

4.2.3. Data analysis

The analysis of the key informant interviews commenced with listening to audio tracks of the interviews on two occasions to refresh memory of the content. The transcript was re-read and the process of manual coding within NVIVO 10 began. At this point thematic categorisation (nodding) was started. Coding began with a preliminary list of themes that had been drawn from the literature review and from consideration of the research objectives. An iterative

process was used, whereby quotes from the transcript were coded to the existing themes, and more themes were added as they were identified in the results.

When this initial process was completed, a more fine-grain analysis was pursued. Each of the broad themes was examined to determine if there were sub-themes. This required additional coding, and enabled more of the detail in the data to be explored. The final overview of emerging themes is presented in Table 3.1, (p. 96). At the completion of this initial analysis, the generation of themes had been a positive outcome, but it was challenging to gain an overview across the institutions. At this point I chose to move to manual analysis that supported me to work with the data set in a more cohesive way. I took a large piece of paper and developed a matrix that allowed me to plot the responses from each key informant according to theme. This enabled analysis of how a specific theme was addressed in each institution and supported identification of similarity and difference. Each key informant transcript was reviewed three times to identify responses to key themes.

The use of a guided interview approach raised some challenges in the analysis of this dataset. Although the key informants addressed the same broad topics, specific areas within these topics may not have been addressed by everyone. This meant that it was not always possible to make ready comparison across institutions, due to the way questions were asked and answered. Where possible, in describing the analysis of results, similar responses across institutions are noted, as well as findings that are unique to each individual setting.

The following discussion presents the results of the key informant interviews. The characteristics of practicum in each of the four settings are outlined, and then findings are presented according to key identified themes.

4.2.4. Presentation of findings

In presenting the findings of this chapter, the findings of the interviews have been collated across the four institutions, and discussed in relation to key themes of the study, in particular assessment philosophy and principles, assessment practices, assessment challenges and authentic assessment. Quotes have been integrated throughout the presentation of results to illustrate the participant's narratives and to illuminate key points. Coding has been used throughout the results to identify the source of the quotes and support an audit trail. Coding adopts the following format: (Institution Pseudonym/Role of Participant/ID of participant/Page number: line numbers), e.g. (TAHI/KI/1/5:3-7). In this phase, the abbreviation 'KI' is used to denote the Key Informant role.

4.3. Characteristics of the institutions

Each of the participating institutions offer a three year degree (level 7) leading to teacher registration with accreditation from the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC) to offer an approved initial teacher education programme for prospective early childhood teachers. Each of the institutions operates within the parameters established for practicum by the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC, 2010), which are as follows:

- There must be a minimum of 20 weeks of practicum across the 3 or 4 academic years of the programme.
- Practicum experience is expected to take place in registered schools or licensed ECE centres in New Zealand. It is expected to be scheduled in the academic year to enable the specific objective/s of the practicum to be met.
- Student teachers must experience practicum placements across a range of socioeconomic, cultural and (ECE/school) learner age settings.
- ITE providers must have at least one, three week (minimum length) block of practicum in the first two years of the programme.

However within the NZTC parameters, each institution structures their practicum requirements in different configurations, influenced by philosophical and pragmatic influences that will be outlined in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Each institution organised practicum placements for student teachers in licensed early childhood services. These are block placements which require the student to be in the centre for a minimum of six hours per day, for a continuous, defined period of time. For the institutions in this study, the required duration of an individual practicum ranges in length from a minimum of three weeks to a maximum of six weeks, with the longest block of practicum typically being in the final year of study. During the course of the initial teacher education programme the students across the institutions complete between 20 to 24 weeks of practicum. Then accreditation of programmes that offered field-based components allows for some of the block practicum time to be met in the weekly requirement that students be employed or volunteer in a centre for a minimum of 12 hour per week. Each institution allocated placements according to the NZTC requirements that students experience a range of service types, including public, community and private centres, full day and sessional models, and a range of demographic characteristics (NZTC, 2010).

All of the institutions adopted a triadic relationship model for practicum in which the student is paired with an associate teacher, who is required to be fully qualified, and registered as a teacher in New Zealand (NZTC, 2010), as well as a teacher educator as the representative of the institution. Key informants indicated that finding fully registered teachers to fulfil the role of associate teacher is at times a challenge.

One key area of difference between the four institutions pertains to the inclusion of home-centre (HC) practicum placements within the overall practicum structure. Institutions Toru and

Who offer field-based modes of study, in which students are employed or volunteer in an early childhood centre for a minimum number of hours per week. This centre is considered to be their 'home centre', and this practice time is seen as an integral and integrated component of the programme coursework. In the configuration of practicum, students are able to complete some of their required practicum blocks in this home centre, while also required to complete out-of-home centre practicums in other settings in order to extend their experiences. In offering the opportunity for home centre practicum, the home centre is also seen as an important site of assessment, wherein students are seen in the context of their everyday experiences, and those who support their practice on an on-going basis are able to contribute valuable assessment information. The key informant from Toru explained the rationale for the configuration of home and out-of-home (OHC) practicums as follows:

We have two placements, one in the home centre and one in the out-of-home centre. The home centre placement is actually a formative assessment as well. Although the student is assessed on the learning outcomes it is seen as a formative opportunity for the students to learn for their next placement which is out-of-home centre. And I think that home centre placement is really key because it's in a setting that they are familiar with. (TORU/KI/1/2:16-20)

However, the institutions who did not offer a home centre practicum also presented a philosophical argument in support of the position to only offer out-of-home practica. The key informant from Tahi stated that:

If you look at practicum as a way of learning about teaching, what do you learn by staying in the centre that you work in all the time? You already know that context and know everything that is going on and while you are a student, it's the only chance you've got to go out into other contexts and see what's out there. (TAHI/KI/1/10:17-20)

Table 4.1, on page 115, presents an overview of the characteristics of the four institutions and the way in which practicum is configured in each, providing the context for the discussion presented in this chapter. This information was drawn from the detail provided during the interview, as well as programme information that is publicly available.

4.4. Institutional assessment philosophy

Key informants were asked to describe the way in which assessment practices were informed by the conceptual framework of the programme and guiding philosophical principles, and to provide a rationale for the way in which assessment practices were enacted within the institution. Responses indicate that assessment practices are guided by philosophical beliefs around the role and place of practicum within the programme, as declared in the conceptual framework at each institution, as well as principles that guide interactions with the student teacher.

4.4.1. Conceptual framework

As part of the ITE accreditation process institutions must develop a conceptual framework that expresses the key intent and beliefs of the programme (NZTC, 2007). This framework articulates the values and philosophy that each institution holds in relation to initial teacher education, which in turn must permeate throughout the programme and practices. The conceptual framework must be grounded in knowledge and research related to initial teacher education.

Table 4.1*Overview of practicum characteristics by institution*

Institution	Tahi	Rua	Toru	Wha
Total weeks of practicum	21	20	20	13 weeks, plus combined total of weekly hours.
Configuration of practicum	Yr 1 – 1x3 weeks Yr 2 – 2x4 weeks Yr 3 – 2x5 weeks	Year 1 – 1x4 weeks Year 2 – 1x5 weeks Year 3 – 1x5 weeks 1x6 weeks	Yr 1 – 1x3week HC – 1x3week OHC Yr 2 – 1x3week HC – 1x3week OHC Yr 3 – 1x3week HC – 1x3week OHC	12 hours per week x 40 weeks Yr 1 – 4 weeks OHC Yr 2 – 4 weeks OHC Yr 3 – 5 weeks OHC
Number of visits	1 face to face visit per practicum Weekly contact via phone and email	2 visits per practicum, with an initial liaison visit or phone call to begin	1 face to face visit Introductory contact made with a structured first phone call. On-going contact via email	3 times per year in HC 1 time per year in OHC
Associate Teacher appointed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Portfolios	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Student self- appraisal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Triadic meeting	Yes	Not always	Yes	Yes
Grading	Pass/Fail	For practicum- fail/satisfactory/ good/very good/excellent leading to a final grade of Competent/ Very competent/ Highly competent	Achieved/Not achieved for criteria, leading to pass/fail for practicum	Pass/Fail/Merit
Contract Appraisers	Yes	Occasionally	No	Rarely

The conceptual framework therefore provides the context for decisions related to practicum and practicum assessment. The informant from Wha referred to the conceptual framework of their institution as a 'living document' (WHA/KI/1) – this was made evident in documentation and discussion related to the assessment of practicum. The influence of the conceptual framework was expressed by the informant at Toru as:

Our values are deeply embedded in the conceptual framework. We've carried it through into the student handbooks so the students are aware of it. We've made connections to what their personal and professional characteristics should be like in line with those values and we try to make sure that our staff work according to those as well. (TORU/KI/1/9:6-9).

The conceptual framework also expresses the special character of each institution. Three of the institutions referred to core values that are declared in the conceptual framework that govern institutional practice. These values included a commitment to bicultural practice, holistic development of student teachers, spiritual understanding, competence, and identity. The values have not been specified in more detail, or ascribed to each specific institution, as they are deemed to provide too much identifying detail and would not preserve the anonymity of participants.

The conceptual framework of each institution provides the governing philosophy and principles that shape the practices within the institution. The informant from Wha provided the following description of the way in which the conceptual framework of their programme has been translated into practice:

What we've done is, we've taken the conceptual schema of the degree and we developed a schema ...which is based around dispositional themes and the concept of teacher identity and it's.. both are from a bicultural perspective. So we expect to

*see a student seriously putting into practice these dispositional themes,
understanding their identity as a teacher and being able to articulate that.*
(WHA/KI/1/2:9-16)

Kane (2005), following her review of 27 ITE institutions in New Zealand, argues that conceptual frameworks typically focused on articulating teaching and learning within the sector, how best one learns to become a teacher and the contexts of teacher preparation, with limited attention to deeper principles or theoretical rationale for institutional practice and policy. The scope of the interview did not afford much time for greater interrogation of the conceptual framework and the way in which the framework articulated a clear assessment philosophy. This would be a valuable focus of future research.

4.4.2. The place of practicum in the ITE programme

The key informants reported that practicum is a complex but critical part of effective initial teacher education (Tahi, Rua), and the site of learning in which theory and practice could be integrated in meaningful ways (Toru, Wha). There was an expressed desire that practicum would foster professional growth and support the development of teacher identity, which is reflected in the following quote from the informant at Wha, whereby in assessing student teachers they were looking for *“how they [the student teacher] made connections, and how’s that learning shifted your thinking as a teacher... So we’re looking for shift in practice... and also in what ways is your identity as a person resonated in your practice as a teacher.”* (WHA/KI/1/8:12-14)

Institutions needed to make decisions about the position of practicum within the overall programme structure: would it would be a stand-alone course within the programme; or integrated throughout each of the other papers? The informant at Tahi noted that practicum was initially conceptualised as a component of each paper in the programme, but that this

approach led to students going on practicum with too much course-related assignment work, limiting their opportunity to build relationships with children (TAHI/KI/1). In contrast, Wha adopted the position that the assessment of practicum should be an integral element of each paper, as explained in the following quote.

Our [practicum] is embedded in our papers, it's not a separate course, it's integrated into every paper they do... they can't pass a paper unless they've passed their [practicum], that is quite a strong philosophy of ours, you know, so you've got to pass the theory and you've got to pass a practical to get a paper awarded. (WHA/KI/1/9:9-13)

These findings support the position of practicum as a central and integral feature of initial teacher education (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000) and reflect on-going debate as to how practicum should be integrated in the wider context of a teacher education programme (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008).

4.4.3. Standards-based assessment

Each of the four institutions has adopted a standards-based assessment approach (Sadler, 2005), referencing the Graduating Teacher Standards (NZTC, 2007) in describing the influences that guided the assessment of practicum. Links to the Graduating Teacher Standards were made explicit to student teachers in practicum documentation and practicum preparation. These standards provided the parameters within which each institution operationalised the assessment criteria for practicum, as well as a benchmark for institutions in determining the readiness of students to enter the teaching profession, as found in studies such as Autry, Lee and Fox (2009).

4.4.4. The purpose of assessment

Each informant described assessment as serving summative and formative purposes, in order to meet both student needs and institutional requirements. Formative assessment was viewed by the institutions as a key tool in supporting the students' professional growth as future teachers, and was generally positioned as the primary purpose of assessment, consistent with the findings of Tillema, Smith and Lesham (2011). The informant from Wha commented that formative assessment was most important in the first two years of the qualification, as students were given support, guidance and time for growth, whereas summative assessment became increasingly significant in the final year as students approached graduation and entry to the profession, a position also supported by informants at Tahi and Toru.

The informant at Rua stated that assessment processes were designed to gather formative assessment early in the practicum, so that support can be provided when needed, rather than reaching the end of the practicum facing a potential failure situation. She expressed the philosophy that assessment should focus on growth, and acknowledged that growth may take longer for some students. The informant at Toru described formative assessment as being to support the individual student on their 'learning path' (TORU/KI/1/10:14) highlighting both strengths and areas for growth, while the informant from Wha identified the focus of assessment as strengthening practice and supporting individual transformation and growth.

Summative assessment was required in order to meet the assessment regulations and grading requirements of each institution, as described in Kane's (2005) review. Students must successfully achieve the required outcomes of the practicum in order to proceed through, and graduate from the programme, becoming eligible for teacher registration in New Zealand (NZTC, 2010). The importance of summative assessment was related to programme quality assurance by informants at Tahi and Toru, while the informant at Rua stated that summative

assessment was important to the integrity of the qualification, commenting that *“if we want them to be the best that they can be then you have to have that gatekeeper role - you have to have the willingness to go to the hard places and challenge”* (RUA/KI/1/22:5-7).

4.4.5. Assessment principles

During the interviews, the informants identified a number of principles that shaped the policy and practices of the institutions. These principles have been synthesised in the list below, identifying whether it was noted by individual or multiple sources.

- Assessment should occur in the context of professional dialogue. (Tahi)
- Assessment should focus on strengths but needs to also provide honest, constructive feedback. (Tahi)
- Practicum assessment should be connected to the content of the wider ITE programme to support theory/practice integration. (Tahi, Toru)
- Practicum assessment should adopt a holistic approach that considers personal and professional dimensions. (Rua, Wha)
- Assessment should support students to develop an accurate perception of their skills and build confidence and identity as a teacher. (Rua, Wha)
- Assessment should give each student the opportunity to be successful. (Toru)
- Student teachers should be viewed as adult learners who have existing skills and knowledge, and who are capable and competent. (Toru)
- Assessment should consider the context in which it is conducted. (Toru, Wha)
- Assessment is an act of professional judgement. (Toru)
- Assessment should determine shifts in practice. (Wha)

Findings indicate that each institution positioned assessment as occurring in the context of relationships (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009). Positive, open, supportive relationships were seen to be a

critical importance in fostering rich assessment. The key informant from Rua described the importance of a close relationship as follows: *“we are actually here to journey with you and if there’s areas of need, you are not on your own, we’ll walk the journey with you and walk beside you in that and help you in that area of growth or that development”* (RUA/KI/1/8:10-12). The informants from Wha and Rua suggested that in a campus-based setting, teacher educators become closely acquainted with the students and are able to make responsive connections to their needs and progress, although relationships were also seen as critical for students studying in a distance mode.

Relationships between teacher educators and associate teachers were seen as important in providing understanding of the context in which the assessment takes place. The informant from Toru emphasised the need for teacher educators to understand the community of the early childhood centre, so that assessment decisions would be cognisant of factors that may influence the assessment of the student. Closer relationships with the practicum settings were seen to promote shared understanding and reduce misinterpretation during the assessment process. A commitment to strategies that supported closer connections to the early childhood sector and associate teachers was expressed at each institution, reflecting the value placed on these relationships. These results are similar to the commitment to relationships described in other educational settings, such as the research of Grudnoff and Williams (2010).

Each key informant described a belief that during assessment both the teacher educator and associate teacher should consider not only the teaching practices of the student, but also recognise and attend to their characteristics, values, attributes and dispositions (Haigh, 2005; Rike, 2007). In doing so, teaching is positioned as both a professional and personal act that is shaped by a range of individual characteristics, which require consideration in the assessment process. The informant from Rua described the philosophy of the institution in the following

example: *“it’s not just about having the right technique and teaching, that it’s about character, disposition as well so those things of being gracious and being secure and being teachable are really, really important. And we come back to that in our feedback and our assessment.”* (RUA/KI/1/5:16-19). A further illustration is provided by the informant at Wha, who described some of the dispositional factors that are considered in practicum assessment:

The things that we’ve put into the practicum are based on students being able to show these dispositions in their practice, and so for instance some of them are advocating for social justice, being reflective, being relationally connected, transformative, critically curious, playful, we expect to see those dispositions sitting behind the standards that they have to meet. (WHA/KI/1/3:1-5)

The assessment practices of each institution are underpinned by philosophical and pedagogical principles (Joughin, 2009). The conceptual framework of each institution provides the overarching philosophical statement that positions the way in which the teacher education programme is offered within each institution (Kane, 2005). Practicum and practicum assessment are directly shaped by principles that govern the programme. This discussion has provided some insight into the assessment philosophy that influences practicum assessment, but it is acknowledged that this is a limited analysis. The scope of the interview did not allow for a deeper discussion of the individual frameworks and philosophical positions of each institution; this would be a valuable focus of future research. The following section of this chapter explores the specific practices used by each institution to assess practicum.

4.5. Assessment practices – how institutions assess practicum

The first research objective that guided this study was to investigate the way in which a representative sample of teacher education institutions assessed the early childhood practicum. The following section of this chapter describes the practices that are utilised by

institutions to assess practicum, as reported by key informants. Each institution followed a similar protocol in relation to the way in which practicum is assessed, although there were individual differences related to the organisational culture of the institution. Discussion will consider points of similarity and difference across the institutions.

Each of the institutions relied on the contribution of the teacher educator and the associate teacher to the assessment process, with some input from the student teacher. Similar to the findings of Beck and Kosnik (2000), the associate teacher was seen as the present, every day support and guide for the student, able to observe the student's practice across time, while the teacher educator would typically visit once during the practicum to conduct a formal assessment visit. Rua was the only institution that specified two assessment visits per practicum. The key informant from Rua justified this choice in stating; *"we do the two visits because one visit it is easy to kind of wing it and show, you know, put on a mask if they want to and just do what they think needs to be seen, but two visits you can see the growth or you can see if they have improved"* (RUA/KI/1/11:19-21). The other institutions did note that they would conduct second or subsequent visits if any concerns were raised regarding the student's practice or progress during the practicum, a strategy also identified in Kane's (2005) review of ITE programmes.

4.5.1. Triadic assessment meeting

Three of the four institutions typically used a formalised 'triadic' meeting with student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator, as the forum for the assessment discussion and feedback, while the fourth (Rua) used a triadic meeting if it was appropriate to the needs of the early childhood setting, i.e. if the associate teacher was able to come off the floor for a meeting. If the associate teacher was not able to participate in the triadic meeting, then individual meetings were held with the associate teacher (while the teacher remained on the

floor with children) and student teacher to complete the assessment and provide feedback.

The triadic was viewed by all institutions to be an assessment forum where feedback from the associate teacher and teacher educator could be shared, with an emphasis on identifying strengths and areas for future growth and achievement. The contribution of students was also sought, in response to the feedback, as well as to share their own reflections of their achievements during the practicum. The key informant from Tahi provided the following description of the triadic assessment meeting, which reflects the descriptions shared by the other informants.

Then once you observe for that time, you sit the with associate teacher and the student and we also ask the student, how do you feel that you went and what are you proud of, what would you still like to achieve, and then ask the associate teacher what they have observed, and then give our feedback. It's all written out and the student has to sign it if they agree and they have to sign it, I always ask the student to sign it to say they've read it so it's transparent, even if they are going to fail. (TAHI/KI/1/16:5-11)

The format and nature of the triad meeting described by the key informants shows a great deal of similarity to the approach described by Turnbull (1999), suggesting the triadic meeting is an established feature of practicum assessment in New Zealand.

4.5.2. Observation

As described by Haigh, Ell and Mackisack (2013) and Rorrison (2012), observation played a key role as an assessment tool in this study. Each institution required the teacher educator to spend time with the student teacher observing their practice with children. Typically the expected duration of the observation was to between 40 minutes (Rua) to two hours (Tahi and Wha). It was suggested that the observation time would be determined by the needs of the

student. The informant from Tahi commented that *“if the student’s really good you don’t need two hours. But if the student’s not, you sense something’s not happening, you need to observe for two hours to give the student fair assessment”* (TAHI/KI/1/16:1-3). It was expected that the teacher educator would use these observations, both formal and informal, to guide their discussion with the student, and support the decision making process. These observations were considered to serve an evidentiary purpose, as indicated by the informant at Wha.

As part of the process, lecturers must do an hour’s observation, it must be recorded and a copy given to the student... if you say someone isn’t communicating, is not being inclusive of all children in a group, we have to see that evidence in your observation to back that up. Otherwise don’t write it.
(WHA/KI/1/32:22-33:2)

Key informants indicated that there was an institutional expectation that the associate teacher will observe the student teacher’s practice during the practicum, and would be able to contribute this knowledge to the triadic assessment meeting, and in informing the associate teacher written assessment report. However, whether the observations are to be formal or informal was not specified.

4.5.3. Documentation

Documentation was also used to inform assessment decision making. At each institution, key informants indicated that students were required to provide written evidence of their achievement of specified tasks, goals, and criteria. For example, for Rua, students are required to document their weekly discussions with the associate teacher that specified their progress with goals. For Tahi, students must keep a portfolio of work that is shared with the associate teacher, and submitted to the teacher educator at the end of the practicum. For Wha, students keep a workbook throughout the practicum, in which to record reflections, goal progress and achievement of criteria. Students at Toru are encouraged to send documentation

to the teacher educator by email on a weekly basis, so that they can receive more immediate feedback. Portfolios of evidence were seen to be a valuable documentary tool in the assessment process. Students were required to collect a range of documentation to be reviewed by the associate teacher and teacher educator, which demonstrated their achievement in required tasks, or against established criteria. This often took the form of observations, planning sheets, photographs, self-evaluations and written feedback from the associate teacher or others. These findings support those of Haigh, Ell and Mackisack (2013) who identified review of documentation as a one of the key components of assessment decision making, offering a different perspective to add to the observation and reports of assessors.

In relation to the role of documentation, the key informant from Tahiti raised the issue that institutions need to be aware of the documentation requirements that they place on student teachers, to ensure that some students are not privileged and others disadvantaged due to access to technology, commenting that *“having a nicely formatted portfolio just might mean that you’re rich enough to have good technology at home and how does that disadvantage someone who’s actually got wonderful interactions but can’t afford the flash digital camera and so on”* (TAHI/KI/1/6:2-5).

4.5.4. Use of assessment criteria

Each institution had pre-determined criteria that students were expected to meet during the practicum. The criteria were set by the institutions to support continuity and consistency of assessment through shared understanding of expectations and to provide a tool to support assessment decision making, a finding supported by Brown (2008). Informants indicated that criteria were made explicit to the student teacher and the other participants prior to the practicum in written documentation provided, typically a practicum handbook or guide.

Criteria form the basis of assessment at each institution. Practicum courses specify learning outcomes that are then operationalised in terms of criteria, or indicators, that specify the practices student teachers are expected to demonstrate in order to pass the course. An example of this process was provided by the key informant at Toru, and similar processes were identified in other institutions:

[Practicum] is treated as a course, a course on its own. It is linked into the other courses that the students study, but as a course it has its own course description with learning outcomes and criteria. That course description is used to develop what we call an appraisal document... the appraisal document states the learning outcome and the criteria that the student could use to actually demonstrate that they've met the learning outcome. There's a range of criteria, they're all linked to each other and, ideally we'd like the student, in an ideal situation, the student will demonstrate all of them. But if we see, for example if there are six criteria, we see them demonstrating four and we're confident that they've demonstrated that or they've achieved that outcome, then we are able to sign it off. And that's how, that is essentially how the assessment happens. (TORU/KI/1/4:1-10)

In all four institutions, informants indicated that criteria were established to reflect progression in student practice, building from one year of study to the next indicating the trajectory that students were expected to follow in their professional growth. Professional practice was seen on a continuum, reflecting a belief that the student's practice will evolve over time, as a result of increased experience in education settings, and engagement with theory and research within the ITE programme. The key informant from Rua indicated that criteria was seen as an important tool in helping each of the member of the triad to identify and articulate areas of strength or potential gaps in the student teacher's practice, as appropriate for their stage of study. The key informant from Tahi commented that progressive

criteria were requested by associate teachers in order to ensure appropriate assessment judgments for students at each stage of the programme, as outlined in the following quote.

So one of the things was the associate teachers wanted the clear progressions for guidance, so that they weren't saying to a year three student, you are fine, but they were using like the year one... what we thought were year one indicators... to say they are fine, which is why we ended up with them just about to graduate and we realised, oh no, you are still only a year one level. (TAHI/KI/1/21:2-6)

Key informants were asked to describe the way in which criteria for practicum assessment were established. As described earlier, the Graduating Teacher Standards (NZTC, 2007) were identified by each informant as providing the global standards for practicum outcomes, but these were then operationalised within each institution. The informants from Tahi, Toru and Wha indicated that in specifying the assessment criteria, explicit connection to the Graduating Teacher Standards is made. The informant from Wha explained the rationale for this decision in the following quote:

...feedback from the students is that, it's been really helpful to them, to have these [criteria] and know that they're connected to Graduating Teacher Standards and we tried to keep the language fairly consistent because we want to make sure that they understand the connection between an external body requirement and what they're doing in the course. (WHA/KI/1/6:4-8)

The key informant from Tahi reflected that the criteria established for practicum reflect the cultural discourses around the current understanding of early childhood education and what it means to be an early childhood education teacher, commenting on the influence of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), the *Graduating Teacher Standards* (2007) as well as the discourse of the individual institution. The contribution of stakeholders was also noted as

significant in shaping the assessment criteria, in particular feedback from those within the early childhood sector, the future employers of these graduates. Institutions drew on their advisory groups and other networks to ensure criteria were established in collaboration with key stakeholders. Stakeholder feedback also supported on-going institutional review of criteria. Criteria clearly played an important role in the assessment process, as also found in Kane's (2005) review of ITE programmes. Findings suggest that key informants were aware of the need to be flexible in the application of assessment criteria, in order to respond to the context of the assessment, and the meaning and integrity of the student teacher's practice (Veal & Rikard, 1998), rather than a reductionist checklist. However, the interviews did not address the way in which assessment criteria are developed to attend to higher order teaching skills, or the craft of teaching, rather than more observable or technical elements, a criticism of criterion-based approaches raised by Coll, Taylor and Grainger (2002).

4.5.5. Goal setting and reflection

Alongside pre-determined assessment criteria for the practicum, all four institutions expect student teachers to determine professional and personal goals for the practicum. These goals are shared with the associate teacher and the teacher educator, and appropriate strategies negotiated. The student is expected to demonstrate, and often times document, their progress towards the achievement of these goals. These goals may be tied explicitly to the criteria (at Wha) or may relate more generally to areas of personal or professional practice (at Toru). One example of the goal setting process was described by the key informant from Rua:

One of their tasks each practicum is they are required to reflect on that continuum [assessment criteria] and identify where they are feeling comfortable, where they are feeling strong or anything that they are feeling like they can't do or they need to really work on, and the idea is that they build on it. So in their meetings with their associate teacher each week they might identify something and set a goal for

the following week. So they are setting sort of short term goals, as well as in their prac briefing they set goals for that practicum that they might know. (RUA/KI/1/4:1-7)

While goal setting is referred to by each key informant as one element in assessment decision making, little specification of the process and practices around goals was provided in the interviews, so comment on typical practice is not possible. Similarly, goal setting and achievement receives little attention in the practicum literature, and yet the reports of informants indicate that it is an established evidence point in assessment, suggesting the need for further consideration.

4.5.6. Self-assessment

Interviews revealed that each institution saw the value of student self-assessment: *“what we wanted to do is make more visible the students’ voice in the practicum, especially in the documentation”* (WHA/KI/1/5:17-18), but self-assessment is understood, and enacted in different ways. The key informant at Tahi reported that students use a self-assessment tool that specifies the Graduating Teacher Standards and requires students to collect evidence and reflect on the ways in which their practice reflects these standards. At Rua, students are not required to complete a formal self-assessment, but it is anticipated that self-assessment will be captured in the requirements for written and verbal reflection. At Toru, the student is required to complete a form prior to the final assessment visit in which they reflect on their achievement of goals, criteria achieved, and areas for future development. The key informant for Rua indicated that self-assessment was an area they wished to address further in future reviews of practicum. Self-assessment is captured in the practicum workbook at Wha, in which students have space to write their own reflections against the specified criteria, which are shared at the time of the assessment visit.

Self-assessment is viewed as providing another 'lens' (WHA/KI/1) through which the teacher educator can understand the practices of the student teacher, providing another piece of the assessment picture. In the following quote, the informant from Toru describes the way in which self-assessment is considered alongside other assessment information by the teacher educator:

It has to be completed by the time of that visit so that the visiting lecturer has, and the AT has as well, she has both of those forms in front of her with the appraisal document, with the field practice folder, all of that needs to go into that discussion, and then only does the visiting lecturer complete her report.

(TORU/KI/1/18:15-18)

While the role of self-assessment was acknowledged by each key informant, it did not appear that the contribution of the student was given a high-priority in the described assessment practices. The results suggest that the feedback of the teacher educator and associate teacher are given primacy in assessment decision-making, with the contribution of the student teacher serving more of an evidentiary or reflective purpose, rather than self-assessment that encouraged student teachers to become more involved and skilful in monitoring and reviewing their own teaching practice (Lew, Alwis & Schmidt, 2009). The hierarchical triad model may serve to perpetuate the dependence of student teachers on the assessors (Dayan, 2008) as the source of evaluation.

4.5.7. Feedback

Feedback to student teachers is seen by each institution as a key purpose of the assessment process, supporting the findings of authors such as Haigh, Ell and Mackisack (2013) and Badger (2012). At each institution, feedback is given to students both verbally and in writing.

Practicum materials given to the associate teacher indicate the expectation that associate teachers will provide student teachers with feedback throughout the practicum to foster their

professional growth. Whether this feedback during the practicum is to be verbal or written is not specified, nor are there guidelines as to how often, or in what way the feedback should be given. The informant at Tahi suggested that students can have higher expectations about how much feedback they should be given, which can lead to conflict between student and associate, as found by Harwell and Moore (2010). The informants at Tahi and Rua both commented that the ability to receive feedback and respond appropriately was an important professional skill for student teachers, as illustrated in the following quote:

Then the associate teacher provides them feedback once again on their practice, their reflections and their significant incident because we wanted to ensure that our students leave being able to hold a professional dialogue, not to get defensive about constructive feedback, because we see professional dialogue as a way to just build on-going professional learning. (TAHI/KI/1/2:13-17)

Professional development will be considered later in this chapter, but it is of note here that the informants from Tahi, Toru and Wha all mentioned that equipping both associate teachers and teacher educators with skills related to feedback was a focus of professional development offered by institutions. These findings reinforce the perceived importance of feedback in assessment, as argued by Hattie and Timperley (2007). The informants suggested that professional development was needed as there were concerns about the nature and consistency of feedback offered by assessors, issues also identified by Copland (2010) and Kahu (2008), and expressed a desire for improved practice in this area.

4.5.8. Decision-making practices

Each key informant was asked to describe the way in which final assessment decisions for practicum were determined. In each institution decisions were made as a result of considering the teacher educator's assessment, the associate teacher's assessment, the student's

feedback, as well supporting documentation. Multiple perspectives are considered, similar to those described by Haigh, Ell and Mackisack (2013). The following quote from the informant at Tahī typifies the responses across institutions, whereby decisions are made *“by taking into account the [teacher educator’s] feedback, the associate teacher’s feedback, what we know of the student and the student is always given right of explaining”* (TAHI/KI/1/7:13-14).

In each of the four institutions the final assessment outcome of the practicum was deemed to be the responsibility of the institution, due to the summative requirements of grading pertaining to practicum. At Rua and Toru, associate teachers were given the opportunity to indicate a suggested grade for the practicum, but the final allocation of grade was made by the teacher educator or the practicum course leader (at Rua).

While feedback regarding the student teacher’s practice, and an indication as to whether the practicum has been successful, is given at the time of the assessment visit, the final assessment outcome is not always declared at that point of time. For three of the institutions (Tahī, Rua and Whā) the final decision is not given until all documentation is received from the student and the associate teacher, and the teacher educator could look at the whole picture.

4.5.9. Grading models

A range of grading models were used in the institutions, from pass/fail through to a five point rating, as outlined in Table 4.1 (p. 115). In determining the grading approach taken, the informants discussed whether it was appropriate for grading of practicum to follow the same model as for other courses. For example, the informant at Tahī commented that some colleagues wished to see a letter (A,B,C) grading model used, as for other courses, but that this was deemed to be problematic as too many variables beyond the student could potentially impact the student and their assessment outcome. The choice to adopt fewer and wider grade

bands simplifies decision making, but can be at the cost of acknowledging the quality of achievements. However informant responses indicate that qualitative feedback was provided in the verbal and written assessment feedback provided for the student, rather than grade specification. Informants at both Tahi and Rua indicated that the current pass/fail model was the cause of some contention for staff and students, and that continued discussion would consider whether there would be a shift in practice to include grades that further indicated the quality of practice. This debate is very similar to that presented in Turnbull's (1999) study, in which staff were also in disagreement over the nature of grading model to be utilised, and concerned that grading would change the way students responded to the practicum experience. Similar to the two institutions in the present study, Turnbull (1999) indicated that the decision was made to implement grading for practicum, but that the model was tabled for further review.

4.5.10. When students are not succeeding

One of the issues explored with each of the institutions was the way in which they responded to student teachers who were not meeting the expectations for practicum, and who were at risk of failing. Informants at each institution indicated that it was possible for a student to fail practicum, and that the potential for failure was an important indication of the integrity and quality assurance of the qualification. The key informant from Tahi captured what was a typical response:

I think we are gatekeepers because that's quality assurance, you know? We have to show, I mean just from a practical point of view, you've got to show that quality assurance to get re-approval. But from another point of view you're... devaluing the qualification of your institution if you allow everyone to pass. You know, if you want your degree to be well respected and robust there has to be some measure

of gatekeeping. We can't let people that obviously don't make the grade pass.

(TAHI/KI/1/28:11-16)

Informants at each institution indicated that any decision in relation to a student failing the practicum would be the result of extensive communication, between the student, associate teacher, and teacher educator, as well as those in a more senior leadership position within the institution, such as a practicum or programme leader. All key informants indicated that policy would be for a fail decision to be made back at the institution, with support for the teacher educator, and discussion with the wider team of professionals. The decision would not be made in the triadic meeting itself, although the student would be alerted to the fact that there were concerns in relation to their practice, and informed as to the process that would be followed.

All of the institutions would in most circumstances offer the student who was failing practicum the opportunity to repeat the failed practicum. In some situations, this might just be one practicum; at other times the student may have to repeat all of the practicum requirements for their stage of study. A second failure would typically see the student referred to the programme level, with exclusion from the programme the likely outcome. In less serious cases, informants at Rua and Toru indicated that students may be offered an 'extended practicum' where, with the approval of the centre, the student remained on practicum for an additional one or two weeks in the hope that they would meet expected criteria. These strategies mirror those reported by Kane (2005), suggesting that a similar approach to failing students is adopted across ITE institutions, and early childhood, primary and secondary qualifications. The informant from Tahi provided the following description of the approach taken in a risk of failure situation:

I organise for someone else to go out and do another visit... and set goals, I've set them goals and sent someone else out and then sometimes I give them another practicum and I go out again and if I don't see a change then that's a clear failure, and couple of times I've had to exit people because of that. (TAHI/KI/1/19:22-20:3)

The informants acknowledged a tension between institutional commitment to support the student, both professionally and personally, and responsibility to ensure that graduates moving into the profession meet the expected competencies, a finding similar to that of Hawe (2001) who highlighted the reluctance of educators to award a failing grade. Responses from each institution indicated a high level of compassion for students, and an acknowledgement that the decision to fail a student was very high stakes. Informants indicated that the approach to a failing situation needed to be rigorous with clear and explicit documentation and evidence of the areas of concern, and the support that had been offered. The key informant from Tahī introduced the idea of a 'courageous conversation' which reflected the notion that at times it is seen as best to counsel the student teacher out of the programme, for the student's own long term wellbeing. When this was the case, there was the desire that students would be 'exited with dignity' (TAHI/KI/1/9:12).

The informants at Whā raised the issues that it was not the students who were clearly failing who were the most challenging, but rather those considered to be 'borderline'. Informants at Tahī, Rua and Whā referred to the challenge of a student making it to the final year of their study and then failing, because allowance had been given in the first two years. The dilemma is described in the following quote from the informant at Whā, which reflects the issues raised by the other informants.

The other real challenge in this... is the student that is constantly borderline - the student whose practice is just making the mark.. and how does an organisation

make the call to fail or not to fail. How does a lecturer make the call then, fail or not to fail, and it's got to be robust. If you're failing someone you've got to have very good justification and evidence for it. And I think that, we discuss that a lot. We've actually said to our teams, we want them to really talk through this issue because it's a really tricky one. And, you know, every institution is going to have them. There's always going to be that one student, and how do you notice this really early on and deal with it at an early stage. And how do you then work with that person to actually get them above, just being border line right through the programme. And I think that's the biggest challenge we've got because they're your mediocre teachers that leave the programme. Everyone knows, you know, they've passed everything, they might even be good academically to be honest...And it's just that they're not, they don't seem to be able to lift their practice beyond that. (WHA/KI/1/23:16-24:3)

The informants at Tahi, Toru and Wha indicated that more allowance would be given to a student earlier in the programme, acknowledging that there was time and opportunity for further growth. This leniency was not suggested by the informant from Rua, where students undergo a reselection process at the end of their first year of study. Practicum in the final year of the programme was seen as the most significant at each institution, with less room for borderline outcomes, in awareness of how close the student is to entering the profession. Informants at Tahi, Toru and Wha suggested that decisions to allow borderline students to pass practicum in the early stages, in the hope that they would improve sufficiently with more time and support, did cause concern when improvement did not occur, and students were left at risk of failure in the final year. This concern was evident in the following quote from the informant at Tahi:

It is a tension because how long do you support someone, and how long do you say, well, I've supported you enough and you're not making the grade so you've got to repeat this practicum. And I think that's why we had some that got through to third year before anyone realised really how bad they were. (TAHI/KI/1/27:10-13)

4.6. Moderation, consistency and fairness

The ways in which each institution addressed issues of consistency and fairness within their practicum assessment processes was explored in each interview. Moderation of assessment is a requirement of accreditation of ITE programmes, as mandated by the NZTC (2010). Interview responses suggest that institutions recognised the need for moderation and were looking for appropriate ways in which to conduct moderation of practicum assessment that would support both the students in the programme, and the assessors. Informants indicated that moderation of practicum was a more challenging process than with paper-based assessments that may be more readily shared amongst the teaching team, as reflected in the following quote from the informant at Toru:

With the moderation, one of the things we've been arguing as well is that, if a student appeals a grade for an assignment, we'll get a clean copy of that assignment and have it remarked, and then if the grades comes, you see what the grades are, but with field practice you can't do that, there's no clean slate with field practice because you've got to know what's gone in to be able to make a judgement on what's come out. (TORU/KI/2/50:25-51:2)

In the few months prior to the interview, Toru had instituted a formal moderation process for practicum assessment, which was in the process of being implemented. This process would take place twice a year, starting with the teacher educator completing a self-survey, and then a

colleague accompanying them on a visit to review the process, documentation and decision making that takes place. After the visit, the colleague who moderates the practicum would contact the student teacher and associate teacher to ask for their feedback on the assessment, and then provide feedback and support to the teacher educator. This was still a new process for the institution, and the informants indicated that there was some tension from teacher educators as this process was initiated. Rua included the assessment of practicum as part of their bi-annual moderation and review cycle. Every two years a stakeholder (typically from the early childhood sector) accompanies a teacher educator on a visit, and provides feedback in relation to the assessment process and outcome. The number of cases that are moderated in this process were not identified.

Informal moderation processes were identified by all key informants, with team meetings identified as a key moderation activity. At these meeting times the outcomes of practicum assessment, as well as any concerning practicum situations are discussed, and professional support and guidance around assessment decisions given. The informant at Tahi revealed the questions that are raised in moderation: *“was it too harsh, was it constructive, was it fair, what can we support the student to do?”* (TAHI/KI/1/9:10). Informal conversations between colleagues were also identified as valuable acts of moderation, as teacher educators had the opportunity for reflection and collegial support.

Moderation of assessment was also seen to be supported through the consideration of multiple evidence points. As described previously, assessment decisions are typically made after consideration of associate teacher, teacher educator and student teacher feedback, as well as supporting written work. Alignment of the different evidence was seen as a form of internal moderation. Alignment was sought within the individual practicum, but also across practicums. For example, the informants at Wha commented that student teachers would be

visited four times during the year, by a range of teacher educators, and any significant difference in assessment outcomes across the practicums would be interrogated.

4.7. Induction and professional development

Informants were asked to reflect on the way in which induction of new staff and on-going professional development addressed the assessment of practicum. Information about induction was gained from informants at Rua, Toru and Wha; however this topic was not covered in the course of the interview with the informant at Tahi. Across the three institutions there was consensus that new staff would be provided with guidance as to the policy and procedures for assessment followed by the institution, the documentation related to assessment policy and practice, and would have the opportunity to observe other team members engaging in the assessment process. The informants at Rua and Toru also indicated that new staff would then be accompanied on their first visits, and given feedback and support. The induction process at Rua is described in the following quote, and is reflective of the descriptions given in other cases.

We had a new staff member start this year and she came with me to prac visits and I talked her through the process and she observed what I did, and then, so she had the opportunity to hear the types of conversations and see what was done and then once she did her own visit I then sort of gave her feedback and had a discussion afterwards on what she was doing and just, again I guess it depends on individual staff and their confidence levels and their competence levels as well in terms of their experiences. (RUA/KI/1/17:4-10)

Beyond induction, the need for on-going professional development that supported practicum assessment practices was also identified by all four institutions. At Tahi and Rua, the teacher educators have regular team meetings and meet at the end of each semester for a time of

review, in which they reflect on practicum, discuss the expectations and criteria and review associated documentation. This time is seen as important in ensuring a consistent approach to assessment across team members. The informants at Wha described recent internal workshops that were provided to staff to enhance moderation and consistency in assessment, as well as workshops related to strengthening the feedback process. Other informants suggested that whole staff professional development provided opportunities to discuss practices and issues related to practicum assessment, especially when enacting changes to the programme.

New Zealand Teachers Council policy stipulates that “appropriate professional development to enable associate teachers to fulfil their roles and responsibilities must be provided by the teacher education provider” (NZTC, 2010, p. 14). Professional development was also offered by all institutions to associate teachers. Tahi had recently offered a workshop for both staff and associate teachers related to report writing for practicum assessment, and had established an online forum for associate teachers to contact teacher educators for advice and support. Rua hosts an annual dinner for all their associate teachers, at which the student teachers serve. Workshops were also offered related to elements of practicum and wider curriculum content, as well as opportunities for associate teachers to complete papers in the wider programme of the institution. Professional development for associate teachers was the focus of an internal project at Toru. A staff member had been appointed in a part-time role to foster relationships with associate teachers and centres, and to offer professional development regionally. Initiatives here led to the development of an online space for associate teachers, as well as providing associate teachers with access to professional readings. At Wha, there is a focus on building regional networks of associate teachers and offering workshops to support on-going development.

4.8. Innovations in practicum assessment

In each interview, each institutional informant expressed a commitment to continually reviewing and improving their practices in relation to practicum and assessment, as captured by the informant at Tahi: “...we are not *perfect* and I think we need to keep working on it but I think we are trying really, really hard...” (TAHI/KI/1/32:23-24). Both Toru and Wha had been through extensive review processes and programme redesign in the period prior to the interview which had brought about change to programme structure and some practices. The guided interview schedule did not specify that the area of innovations would be discussed in the interview, but emerged in the wider conversation, and provide a valuable insight into institutional practice.

Tahi had made a recent change to the overall structure of the practicum schedule, removing the early first practicum, and replacing this with weekly day long visits to a centre in order to give students more opportunity to become familiar with early childhood services prior to embarking on an assessed practicum. They had felt that students were not ready to be summatively assessed so early in the programme, and therefore have lengthened practicum in the later part of the programme. Students return to the centre they visited weekly for their practicum later in their first year, already having developed relationships and contextual knowledge of the centre, which was seen to be supportive of positive practicum experience.

The opportunities offered by technology were also identified as opening up new innovations. E-mail as a communication tool was the most commonly identified, with Tahi and Toru seeing this as an avenue for increased and on-going communication and document sharing with students during the course of the practicum, improving the immediacy of feedback and formative guidance. Tahi has been trialling e-portfolios, in which student teachers document

their work throughout the practicum, and provide evidence for the assessment process. The key informant from Tahi described the trial and potential challenges:

We are trying to introduce a greater component of e-portfolios, so that down the track all their practicum portfolio would be an e-portfolio, so they can burn it to a CD and keep it that way rather than having mountains of paper, but the difficulty with that is once again, the technology that its, because it is new technology, not everyone can handle it, both lecturers and students, and not every student has got the computer at home to be able to do it. (TAHI/KI/1/6:21-25)

Online support was also being implemented by Tahi and Toru, as a means of providing 'at your fingertips' information, support and resources to associate teachers. This allows a greater immediacy of response and ease of access to commonly asked questions and needed resources. The practicum team at Toru had also been developing video resources that would support orientation to practicum for students. These reported innovations reflect the increasing use of technological tools to support student teachers, described by authors such as McLoughlin, Brady, Lee, Russell (2008) and Edwards (2012), suggesting possible future directions for communication and feedback during the practicum.

The informant at Tahi outlined recent moves to more effectively support students for whom English was not their first language, in preparation for practicum, in response to the concerns about the practicum experiences of students who were culturally and linguistically diverse. These concerns mirror those raised by Nuttall and Ortlipp (2012) and Ortlipp (2006), who identify inequitable practices and potential for bias as significant. Collegial support groups had been formed at Tahi to serve as a place where students could practice the language skills that would be used in New Zealand early childhood settings.

So what we have started now is a group where they meet once a week informally and they just bring up things that they find difficult, for example, they said when they go to the staffroom they don't know how to join in a conversation. So we gave them sort of conversation starters, like 'how long have you worked in this centre' and you know, and then they role play having a staffroom conversation. They said they felt they didn't know enough, for example, songs that other students know from their own childhoods. So we've started teaching songs. We have resource making with them so that they have extra resources, and the other thing that I want to start with them is that they buy a couple of simple picture books and practice reading them to the group. (TAHI/KI/1/3:18-26)

The informant at Rua shared the desire of her team to move towards a form of practicum assessment that more closely aligned with the practices used by teachers in early childhood settings. This team were looking to trial the use of narrative assessment, in the form of learning stories (Carr, May & Podmore, 2000) as a potential assessment tool for teacher educators, as they believed that this would also serve as a model to the student teachers of the assessment practices that are being taught within the programme. Assessment principles, such as a focus on student teacher's strengths, acknowledgment of context and use of multiple assessment points over time, as described by key informants, would appear to be closely aligned with the principles identified in *Kei Tua o te Pae – Assessment for learning: Early childhood exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2004). However, the appropriateness of a learning story approach for adult learners, and the way they could be utilised in practicum assessment in a meaningful and appropriate manner would require thoughtful evaluation.

4.9. Institutional challenges related to the assessment of practicum

The key informants identified a range of challenges and constraints in the way in which the assessment of practicum is able to be conducted. Some of these relate directly to the assessment process, while others reflected broader institution issues that have ramifications at the assessment level, such as staffing and budget. The following discussion will examine emerging issues of cost, workload, bias, assessment feedback, regulations and relationships.

4.9.1. Cost of practicum

The cost of practicum, and in particular the costs around appraisal visiting, were identified as challenges by the informants at Tahi and Wha. The informant from Tahi indicated that practicum costs could exceed \$1,000,000 per annum for an institution. ITE is a highly competitive market, with limited funding (Kane, 2005). Institutions have to make challenging decisions around the ways funds are invested and distributed, as this quote from the informant at Tahi reflects.

Teacher education... is a more expensive course to run than a BA or a business course where you don't go out on any practicum.... but nobody acknowledges that. We are expected to run it for the more or less the same amount of funding. It just makes it very tough. (TAHI/KI/1/1:15-18)

The impact of funding was reiterated by the key informants at Wha who stated that *"the whole concept of practicum is undervalued in terms of funding. And though Teachers Council value it... that valuation's not reflected in the funding that we get from the Government to deliver the programme in a quality way, and so, that is a big restraint"* (WHA/KI/2/46:2-5). When asked at the end of the interview if there was anything further they wished to ask, the informants at Wha stated that they wished to advocate for greater funding, although how this would be utilised to enhance practicum was not specified. The impact of funding is perhaps

most apparent in relation to the number of visits that the teacher educators are able to make, as supported by Kane's (2005) findings. Three of the four institutions generally only visit students once per practicum, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Rua, the institution that does visit more than once is a campus-based programme, therefore most student teachers complete their practicum locally, reducing the need for travel. This institution also has the smallest cohort of students.

4.9.2. Workload

Workload was also cited as a challenge by informants at Tahi and Rua, referring to demands on both teacher educators and associate teachers. Teacher educators are typically required to visit multiple students in each practicum block, whilst also maintaining other commitments – this places constraints around how long they can spend with each individual student. Associate teachers must also support student teachers while maintaining their responsibilities in their early childhood setting. The informant at Tahi comments on the significance of teacher educators and associate teachers being 'time poor' with many competing demands, and the implications this has on the investment they can make in the assessment process. These findings support those of Ciufetelli-Parker and Volante (2009) and Sinclair (1997) that teacher educators and associate teachers are concerned about successfully enacting practicum assessment within busy workloads, and wish there was more time to fulfil their role.

4.9.3. Bias

Effective and appropriate assessment of diverse student teachers was also identified as an issue by the key informants at Tahi and Toru. The student population at institutions reflects the growing diversity of our nation. Students from other cultures may not enter the programme with a strong understanding of early childhood education in the New Zealand context, and may hold values and beliefs that are different to mainstream practices. The

informants at Tahī and Toru noted that some students, particularly those for whom English is not their first language, may experience bias and prejudice in the practicum experience, as was similarly found by Ortlipp (2006) and Nuttall and Ortlipp (2012). The informant at Tahī suggests: *“ we have found from feedback ... that our students from overseas that have English as a second language have got particular difficulties... I think that international students are often seen in deficit, you know, rather than that being a gift”* (TAHI/KI/1/3:17-18, 23:5-6). Bias is acknowledged at an institutional level, and responses indicate that an institutional response is seen as important in effecting change in this area. The research related to bias in practicum appears to be generally focused on the experiences of student teachers (Nuttall & Ortlipp, 2012). However, the informant from Toru indicated that it was not only students who were culturally and linguistically different that experienced bias, but so too had teacher educators. She noted experiences where students or associate teachers had asked for a different teacher educator to be assigned to conduct the assessment visit due to the fact that English was not the teacher educator’s first language.

4.9.4. Quality settings

Finding placements for large cohorts of student teachers at a given time can be challenging, and places some constraints on how selective institutions may be in choosing quality centres, and skilled associate teachers, a dilemma also identified by the institutions in Kane’s (2005) review. The informants at all institutions indicated that they were aware that at times student teachers may not receive the ideal support or guidance in the most appropriate teaching practices. These concerns were summarised in the following quote from the key informant at Rua:

While you would hope that all associate teachers are up to date with practice and are committed to providing a really good practicum for those students, you do have the ones that are just in for it for... or they are the only ones that are trained

or so it's the only person who can do it kind of thing and they aren't necessarily the best associate in terms of giving feedback. Either extreme - they are too positive or they are so critical that the student doesn't have a chance to thrive... they are just suffocated and smothered from it. (RUA/KI/1/21:1-8)

Institutions also wrestled with the challenge of placing student teachers in centres that may not be enacting the teaching practices espoused within the ITE programme, particularly when these areas form part of the assessment criteria. Informants suggested that there was a tension when students were not able to demonstrate the range of teaching practices required due to limitations with the early childhood setting and acknowledged the need for teacher educators to be flexible and responsive in such situations in order to support a fair assessment outcome for the student teacher (Ortlipp, 2009).

4.9.5. Feedback

The challenge cited most frequently by all informants related to the need for associate teachers to provide clear, honest feedback that specified any concerns about the student teacher in writing. The informants felt that there were instances where the written assessment feedback from associate teachers was not fully open and honest, particularly in relation to concerns about the student. There was a feeling that reports tended to focus on positive elements, taking a strengths-based approach, with a fear of committing to paper areas of concern. Informants wanted associate teachers to know that this feedback was important in order to provide evidence of concerns, and identify areas where support could be provided. The informant from Tahi provided an example which illustrated concerns related to associate teacher feedback, in which verbal feedback did not align with the associate teacher report.

If they just tell me on the telephone and I have to bring the student in and fail them, I've got no documented evidence to fail them. I can only give them another

practicum, go out and observe them, write it all down myself, get them to sign it, and then fail them. So, you know, if they can see that something needs to be done differently or better they have to state it clearly - they can't sort of fudge it or make it a euphemism, you know, 'cause sometimes you hear on the telephone the student's really terrible and then when you read the report you think that that report isn't bad and it's because of what they haven't said. But I can't fail someone on what isn't there, I need it to be said. (TAHI/KI/1/26:18-25)

The findings support the argument made by Siebert, Clark, Kilbridge and Peterson (2006) that associate teachers find it challenging and complex to support students who are not succeeding in the practicum, and prefer to attend to positive characteristics and strengths, emphasising formative guidance and a desire for students to succeed.

4.9.6. Shared expectations

Lack of agreement in expectations between the institution and associate teachers was also identified as a concern by the informants at all institutions, affirming Haigh and Tuck's (1999) argument that there is significant doubt as to whether stakeholders hold a genuine shared understanding of assessment expectations. The key informants provided examples of situations in which the associate teacher and the teacher educator were not in agreement as to whether the student teacher was meeting the appropriate standards for their stage of study. The informant at Toru commented that, at times, associate teachers held unrealistically high expectations for a student that were not in line with the criteria developed by the institutions. At other times, associate teachers were felt to be overly supportive of the student, who in the view of the teacher educator was not achieving to a suitable level. The following quote from the informant at Rua supported this position.

So that consistency within associate teachers and their expectations versus our expectations too, and the difference between those two things can be quite big at times. We do have quite high expectations of our students and then you have the associate teachers who go nah, nah, they're all fine, it doesn't matter, that's not important, and I think that's quite a challenge. (RUA/KI/1/21:8-12)

Disagreement related to expectations had the potential to cause tension in the triadic meeting, as noted by Smith (2010). Each institution indicated that negotiation between the different parties was seen as critical in achieving an assessment outcome that was fair and appropriate, and that practicum leaders would become involved in the assessment to mediate an outcome if necessary. Smith (2010) suggests that disagreement may be viewed positively if triad members have the time and opportunity to discuss differences and further understand the expectations of each participant.

4.9.7. Relationships and conflict

The significance of relationships to the assessment process was also identified as a potential area of challenge. All key informants acknowledged that at times the relationships between the triad members broke down, or conflict occurred that impacted upon the assessment process. Relationships, particularly between the associate teacher and the student teacher do not always go well, which influences the feedback that is given and the way in which it may be received, as found by Ferrier-Kerr (2009) and Haigh and Ward (2004). Less frequently mentioned, although still of concern, was a difficult relationship between the teacher educator and the student and/or associate teacher. This concern was raised by the informant at Wha, in stating:

Probably every practicum period, there is someone ... that ends up in a situation where the [programme leader] is having to go in and negotiate between the

associate teacher, the student, and the visiting lecturer because there's been an upset about something. (WHA/KI/2/44:24-45:1)

The key informant at Tahi raised the notion of 'goodness of fit', suggesting at times a mismatch of personalities occurs within a given triad. Sometimes, this can be managed professionally with positive outcomes, at other times less so, with consequences for the final assessment. Of note was that institutions sought to frame conflict or relational issues as a professional learning experience for students, as reflected in the following quote from the key informant at Rua.

And sometimes you see that with associates where they don't get on well with their associate, they clash... it's about talking them through those things and you always do have clashes but I think in terms of, particularly ECE, I see that and probably as a team we have talked about it as well, that that's actually an important part of their journey anyway. When you're teaching you are going to have those situations arise and it's actually how you deal with it - that's the important thing. And sometimes it's good that they happen because then they learn that they, well that's the reality, its life, its people. We all says things or do things that we might not mean to, or they might struggle with personality clashes, and then they just know that well how do I deal with this? What are you going to deal with that if the same thing happens when you are out teaching? (RUA/KI/1/9:15-26)

The informants all noted that one of the challenges they faced when assessing the student teacher was how to resolve a discrepancy between the student's practice with children and their corresponding written work. Some students were very strong in their day-to-day practice but poor in their written skills, while others had excellent skills in documentation but were not

as strong in their teaching practice. It was acknowledged that students needed to demonstrate competence in both domains to be a well-rounded professional teacher, and a tension is created when such a discrepancy arose. The following example from the informant at Wha provides illustration of the institutional commitment to both written work and practice.

So a good example of this in action is, at the moment, I know there's one student who has done a very poor reflection. Now she passed, her associate teacher said she was, practice was okay, lecturer said was okay. She has to now resubmit that reflection and if it's not up to standard she risks failing the practicum. So that's how seriously we take the whole package. (WHA/KI/1/10:7-10)

Throughout the discussion surrounding the challenges, there was at times a sense that some constraints were seen as too significant and too fixed to allow for the desired change. But there was also a sense of resilience and commitment to improvement, as the reflected in the following comment from the informant at Tahī: *"It's all a challenge but it's not insurmountable - we just have to keep having conversations and working through it."* (TAHI/KI/1/22:23-24)

4.10. Authentic assessment

Institutions were asked to reflect on the notion of authentic assessment and how they endeavoured to gain an accurate picture of the student as a potential teacher. The informant at Rua described her understanding of authenticity in the following way: *"authenticity is really important and that real honesty... we don't want students to have a false perception of who they are and what their teaching's like, because it doesn't set them up well and it doesn't bode well for us as an institute either in terms of our reputation"* (RUA/KI/1/12:24-13:2). Analysis of the findings indicated both relational and structural factors that are considered by institutions in supporting authentic assessment.

Relational factors that support authentic assessment were consistently identified across all informants, with consensus that positive relationships between student and assessor supported authentic assessment. Knowing the student well, as well as having a good understanding of the context of the practicum setting was seen as enhancing the authenticity of the assessment. Informants from Tahī, Rua, and Wha each mentioned the value of assessments being conducted by a teacher educator who already knew the student teacher and had some prior understanding of them both personally and professionally, however this presumes that the relationship is positive and functioning well.

As a counterpoint, each informant also acknowledged that authentic assessment was supported by being visited by more than one teacher educator over the course of the programme in order to capture multiple viewpoints. Agreement across assessors was highlighted by informants from Toru and Wha as providing further evidence of the authenticity of assessment. The relationships that student teachers had developed with the centre community were also noted by informants at Tahī and Toru, captured in the following quote:

And then the other part which I always look for is the relationships, because you can't lie in that. If the children come up to someone, to the teacher and really initiate interactions then you know they must have been doing something really worthwhile, the times you're not there. Whereas if nobody comes up then that's alarm bells for me. (TAHI/KI/1/19:9-13)

On-going, positive relationships with early childhood centres as practicum sites was identified by the informants at Tahī, Toru and Wha as being important in supporting authentic assessment, as it was believed that associate teachers would be more prepared for, and supported in their role.

The informant at Rua described the outcome of positive relationships between teacher educators and associate teachers as being that: *“the associates know that they can talk to us, they can ask us the questions, they can be honest about things, and I think that helps”* (RUA/KI/1/6:27-7:2).

Structural factors related to how long visits should be and how many visits should occur were not addressed by all institutions, but were raised by individual informants. The informant at Rua indicated that the commitment to visit a student at least twice during each practicum was considered to enhance the authenticity of the assessment:

That’s why I think that’s really important that we don’t just do one visit - we do the two visits because one visit it is easy to kind of wing it and show, you know, put on a mask if they want to and just do what they think needs to be seen, but two visits you can see the growth or you can see if they have improved. (RUA/KI/1/11:18-21)

The other institutions who typically visited once, did not comment that this was a concern, although provision was made at each institution if it was felt that an additional visit was indicated. The informant from Tahī commented that having enough time for the visit was important, in particular, that it should not be rushed and the teacher educator was able to be flexible and responsive as the visit unfolded.

Informants at Tahī, Rua and Toru addressed the issue of whether there should be an expectation for student teachers to pre-plan an activity or experience to demonstrate to the teacher educator during the course of the assessment visit. The informant from Tahī indicated that while such planned situations gave some understanding of the student’s teaching practice, it often became contrived and students were making a ‘guest star appearance’ (TAHI/KI/1) in order to please the expectations of the teacher educator rather than what might

naturally occur at that time. This same dilemma was identified by the informant from Toru, who commented that:

They'll often say, 'Oh, what do you want me to plan while you're there', and I say, 'You know, don't plan anything out of the norm, I want to see you in your normal role as teacher and if that actually means sitting down with a child who only wants you to sit and cuddle them and read a story, then that's what I want to see you doing rather than pushing the child away to do something that you think I might want to see.' (TORU/KI/2/15:1-4)

Informants at Toru and Wha indicated that authenticity was supported by the use of multiple evidence points and multiple perspectives, and that assessment decision-making involved considering the alignment between these sources and how the different forms of feedback reconciled with each other.

4.11. Summary

This chapter has provided an analysis of the key informant interviews conducted for Phase One of this study, considering both the philosophy that guided assessment as well as the assessment practices enacted at each institution. The intent of this chapter was to address the first research objective *“to critically examine how a representative sample of New Zealand ITE institutions assess the early childhood practicum”*. The findings of this chapter have provided an understanding of the institutional context within which practicum occurs. The findings suggest that institutions have well-established assessment practices that are guided and informed by external accreditation requirements as well as the conceptual framework of the programme, and are regularly reviewed and revised. The informants have described the way in which practicum is assessed in each institution, indicating the multiple points of evidence that are considered within the assessment act. Analysis has revealed many points of similarity in

assessment practices across institutions, and has highlighted some of the characteristics that are unique to specific institutions. This chapter has provided insight into the assessment decision making process, as well as identifying areas of challenge for institutions. The following chapter moves to foreground the individual plane; investigating the results of an online survey that was distributed to key practicum participants in each institution.

Chapter Five - The Intrapersonal Plane

5.1. Introduction

Although practicum assessment is a requirement of initial teacher education, it is accompanied by a set of unknown factors that can make assessment challenging for the individuals involved. Having considered assessment of practicum as an institutional act in Chapter Four, this chapter illuminates the assessment of practicum as an individual experience. This chapter presents the results of Phase Two of the study, an online survey, which foregrounds the intrapersonal plane. The intent of this phase was to gain an understanding of the beliefs, perceptions and experiences of individual student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators as they engage with the assessment of practicum. This chapter begins with an overview of the sample, data collection and data analysis procedures, and then presents the results of the online survey according to key themes. This chapter primarily addresses research objective two: *“To critically examine the beliefs, perceptions and experiences of key stakeholders in the assessment of practicum”*, however participants also provide further understanding in relation to research objective three: *“To identify the factors that support authentic assessment of student teachers’ practice during practicum”*.

5.2. Description of research methods

5.2.1. Sample

An online survey was utilised in this phase, as the quantitative component of the mixed methods design. Mixed methods approaches acknowledge that quantitative statistical analysis and rich qualitative analysis can together inform and enhance the overall understanding of a given phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Collins, Onwuegbuzie and Sutton (2006) purport that mixed methods approaches foster participant enrichment and significance enhancement, which guided the decision to use an online survey. The online survey provided the opportunity

to gather responses from a much larger population of participants, with the intent of providing breadth of data that would enhance the depth of data gathered in phases one and three. In order to gather as many participants as possible, no sampling methods were utilised, and an invitation to complete the survey was sent to all student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators who were within the three year early childhood initial teacher education programme. Table 5.1 presents the number of responses received from each population group per institution.

Table 5.1

Number of questionnaire respondents per institution and total

Institution	<u>No. of respondents per institution</u>			Total
	Students	Associate Teachers	Teacher Educators	
Tahi	17	8	4	29
Rua	8	3	3	14
Toru	14	12	10	36
Wha	35	3	3	41
	74	26	20	120

5.2.2. Data collection

For ease of participant response, as well as effective management of a potentially large data set, the decision was made to use the online survey tool, Survey Monkey. An online tool was chosen in preference to a mail survey, in the hope that this would enhance the response rates (Vehovar & Manfreda, 2008). Three online questionnaires were developed; one for each of the three population groups (student teacher, teacher educator and associate teacher). These questionnaires are included as Appendices K, L and M. The questions for the surveys were generated after Phase One data collection was complete, to allow question development to be informed by the literature review and the results of key informant interviews. Question generation began with a brainstorm of a master list of potential questions. Questions were

checked against the research objectives to ensure that each would measure an aspect of the objectives and address the key areas of the study. It was considered important to ask questions in relation to participants' beliefs about the assessment of practicum as well as eliciting description of specific assessment practices and experiences. Discussion with supervisors and colleagues supported refinement of the questions, a process that required several revisions before the version used was completed. To support data analysis, questions were aligned across the three questionnaires wherever possible, but were focussed to address the different roles of the student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator. Each questionnaire underwent pilot testing, which prompted a number of valuable amendments and clarifications, strengthening the questionnaires prior to distribution. As my own institution was not one of the sites of research, I approached colleagues and students to trial the draft questionnaires on a voluntary (and anonymous) basis. They were assured that their responses would not be used in the study in any way, only to strengthen the research tools used. Eight students, two teacher educators and two associate teachers provided feedback on the pilot testing. My supervisors also provided critique on the draft versions of the questionnaires.

The intent of this phase was to gather both qualitative and quantitative data, as part of the QUAL/quan sequential exploratory design, as described on page 89. To capture both forms of data, a range of question types were utilised including rating scales, yes/no responses, check boxes and open-ended responses. A balance was sought between questions that would allow the participants to move through the questionnaire with ease and at a good pace, as well as providing opportunity for fuller explanation and description where required. Questionnaires were structured around the key themes of the study (as presented in Table 3.1 *Thematic overview*, p. 96).

To maintain the privacy of participants, it had been agreed that each institution would distribute an invitation to participate in the survey. Emails were developed for each participant group which outlined the nature of the study, invited participation, and provided the link to the survey site on Survey Monkey (see Appendix N). Attached to this email was a PDF file which provided a more comprehensive information sheet, explaining the nature and purpose of the study, and the rights of participants (see Appendix E). These emails were sent to the liaison at each institution, who then forwarded them to the designated groups – all student teachers, all teacher educators and all associate teachers associated with the three year early childhood bachelor level initial teacher education programme. The emails were sent in October 2011, hoping to recruit students in the later part of their academic year when they were likely to have experienced at least two practicums. At this point, one institution felt it was not a good time for distribution of the survey, due to other internal research obligations and so this was delayed until March 2012.

Initial responses across each institution were not as high as hoped for. This necessitated discussion with each institution as to the possibility of sending out a reminder. Each institution agreed, and so a follow up email was distributed, which subsequently increased participation numbers. Discussion with institutions suggested that access to associate teachers was most problematic, as they did not always hold an individual email address for all associate teachers, and email requests were then sent to the general email for the early childhood centre. The approach relied on the email reaching the correct associate teacher. A request was made for institutions to provide detail regarding how many survey invitations were distributed to each participant group, however this detail was not provided, and therefore actual response rates were not able to be determined. Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2012) suggest that while important, response rates in education are often low, and it is the quality of response, as well as any indication of representativeness that is more important.

5.2.3. Data analysis

Survey Monkey allows for both individualised and group coding. Each participant who responded to the survey was automatically generated a code that gave them an individual and institutional identity. Analysis tools with Survey Monkey allowed for data to be analysed by individual, by institution or by question, or a combination of factors, which gave functionality to the analysis process.

Analysis was approached on a question by question basis. The first step in the analysis process was to print the results for each individual survey question. For each question a set was made that included the student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator responses, in order to support analysis across participant groups. These sets were bound into a large book, and each question then analysed.

Quantitative questions were collated to determine patterns of responses, and comparisons drawn between the three participant data sets. Descriptive statistical analyses (Salkind, 2004) were conducted where appropriate to describe key findings. Further statistical analysis was limited by the low overall numbers of respondents, in particular associate teachers and teacher educators, and the even lower rates of response to individual questions in the survey. Salkind (2004) suggests that there is general agreement that a sample size of about 30 is needed to draw robust inferences. This approach to analysis was also guided by the intent of the study to be illuminative, rather than comparative or correlational in nature, in line with focus of the research questions .

The qualitative, open-ended questions within the survey were analysed through a process of open coding (Punch, 2009), in which the responses of the participants were analysed to identify key ideas and emerging categories. Where possible, the categories emerging from

each question were then quantified and presented in table form. As with the other phases in the study, the narrative of participants was considered to be important in presenting the data (Punch, 2009), so quotes are provided throughout the results to highlight key findings.

5.2.4. Presentation of results

There were several potential options for presenting the results and analyses of this phase, but in line with the decision making for the overall thesis, a thematic approach was selected as providing the most cohesive and manageable method for analysing the extensive data gathered. Where appropriate, quotes from participants have been provided to support theme identification or illumination of key points. Quotes are coded in accordance with the format described in Chapter Four, as follows: (Institution pseudonym/Role of the Participant/ Participant ID). As the results are not drawn from transcript data, as in Phase One and Three, page numbers and line numbers are not included in coding for this phase. The following abbreviations have been used to identify the participant's role: ST = student teacher, AT = associate teacher, TE = teacher educator.

The nature of the online survey was such that respondents were able to take a 'pick and choose' approach to completing individual questions, which resulted in a variance in response rates to individual questions. In general response rates were lower for questions that required a qualitative (open ended) response, and also tapered off in the later questions. Percentages throughout the following discussion reflect percentage of responses to individual questions, rather than the overall participant group. For clarity, the identification system of ($n=$) has been used throughout to acknowledge this.

5.3. Profile of participants

5.3.1. Student teachers

A total of 91 student teachers responded to the demographic questions of the survey.

However, 17 students did not go on to answer any further questions in the body of the survey and the decision was therefore made to exclude these student teachers from the sample. This

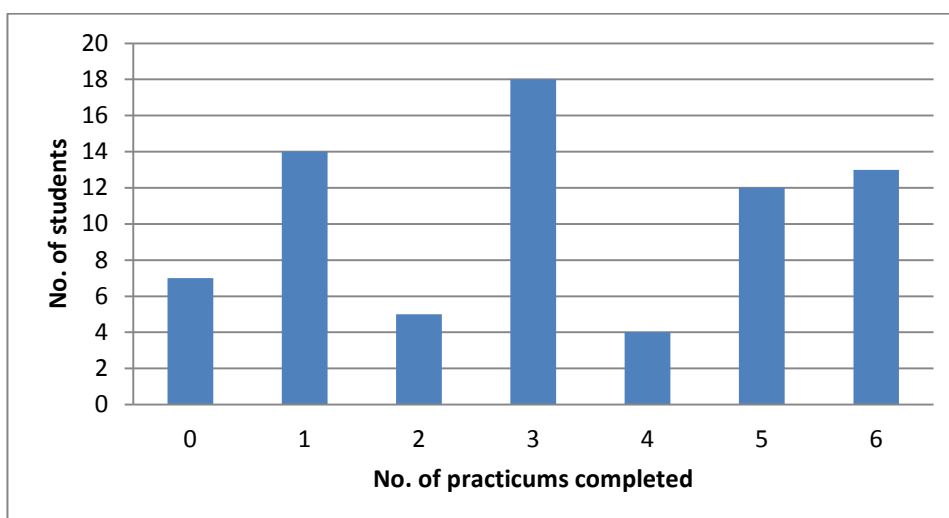
left a sample of 74 student teachers, all of whom were female. There was a wide age range of students, reflecting the dual pathways of recent school leavers, and later- life career changers.

When asked to identify which age range they were in the majority of students (54%) were in the 20-29 year age group, with a further 20% between 30-40 years of age. The participants

encompassed students across the stages of study, from those in the first year of the ITE programme (31%), to those close to graduation (59%). Figure 5.1 illustrates how many

practicums the participants had completed. Those who indicated that they had completed no practicums were still included in the survey results, as related comments indicated that at the time of survey they were currently undertaking their first practicum.

Figure 5.1. Number of practicums completed



5.3.2. Associate teachers

A total of 26 associate teachers responded to the survey, all of whom were female. When asked to identify which age range they were in the majority (62%) of associate teachers were between the ages of 30 and 49 years, with a further 31% aged 50 years or more. Associate teachers reported a high level of experience in assessing student teachers on practicum. When asked to rate their experience on a 1-5 scale, 23% identified themselves as having 'some experience' (3 on the rating scale), while 77% rated themselves as either a 4 or a 5, with five being classed as 'extensive experience'. None of the respondents identified themselves as having little or no experience, indicating an experienced sample group overall.

Associate teachers were asked to rate their overall level of confidence in assessing student teachers. There was a high level of reported confidence overall, with 70% rating themselves as either 'confident' or 'very confident'. They were then asked to select factors that influenced their level of confidence in assessing student teachers. On-going professional development (96%, $n = 23$) and experience as an early childhood teacher (87%, $n = 23$) were identified as being the most significant factors. Of note was that the factor selected least often was 'associate teacher training received from the teacher education institutions' (35%, $n = 23$).

Associate teachers were asked to rate their confidence in relation to specific elements of the assessment act, as presented in Table 5.2. Results support the contention that associate teachers feel confident in their role, although 61% of associate teachers acknowledged that at times they have doubts about their assessment feedback.

Table 5.2*Associate teachers' ratings of confidence in specific assessment acts*

Specific assessment acts	No. of participants				Rating average
	Strongly agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)	
I feel confident in contributing to assessment decisions	11	8	0	0	3.58
I feel confident in interpreting assessment criteria	7	11	1	0	3.32
Sometimes I have doubts about my assessment feedback	3	8	6	1	2.58
My skills in assessing student teachers has improved with experience	15	4	0	0	3.79
I feel well prepared to contribute to the assessment of student teachers	9	10	0	0	3.47
I feel confident in contributing to the assessment meeting	9	10	0	0	3.47
I feel confident in my ability to give verbal feedback to students	9	10	0	0	3.47
I feel confident in my ability to give written feedback to students	9	10	0	0	3.47

Note. n =18.

Associate teachers were asked to identify what they considered to be their primary role in the assessment of practicum. Participants were provided with only two options for this question, requiring them to choose between a formative assessment role and a summative assessment role. The majority of associate teachers (74%, $n =17$) indicated that they saw their primary role as formative: *'to assess the student teacher's achievement of goals to provide individual feedback, support and guidance for professional growth'*. Only 26% ($n =6$) believed that their primary role was summative: *'to assess the student against the institution's required standards to determine if they are meeting expectations'*. Associate teachers were given the opportunity to offer comment in response to their choice. Responses indicated that associate teachers

found it difficult to be forced to choose between these role positions, with elements of both summative and formative assessment seen as being relevant to their role. One associate teacher commented that: *"I believe that the required standards of the institutions are items that need to be met but feel that the purpose of practicum is for a student to reflect on what they already know, what they can learn and how this can impact on their own professional practice"* (WHA/AT/3), while another associate teacher adopted the opposite position in stating: *"I like to have a balance between these two areas, however meeting institution required standards takes precedence"* (TORU/AT/4). It appears that associate teachers see formative and summative assessment as dual elements of their role, with a greater emphasis on formative purposes, a similar finding to those reported by Beck and Kosnik (2000) and Tillema, Smith and Lesham (2011).

5.3.3. Teacher educators

A total of twenty teacher educators responded to this survey, four of whom were male. When asked to identify which age range they were in, the majority (47%) of teacher educators were within the 40-50 year old age group; a further 42% were over 50 years, while only 11% of teacher educators were less than thirty years of age. The teacher educators indicated a high level of experience in assessing student teachers on practicum, with all respondents rating themselves as a 4 or 5 on a rating scale, where 5 was extensive experience. A similarly high rating was noted when teachers educators were asked to rate their confidence in assessing student teachers, with 94% of participants rating themselves either 'confident' or 'very confident'. This signifies that the sample consider themselves experienced and confident teacher educators, and may reflect that it was more experienced educators who chose to contribute to the study, although there is limited evidence to support this possibility. When asked to identify factors that have influenced their confidence in the assessment process, 90% of respondents selected 'length of experience in teacher education', followed by 79% for

‘previous teaching experience in the early childhood sector’ ($n = 19$). In contrast, the areas least identified were ‘induction to the role’ (26%) and ‘observation of more experienced colleagues’ (26%). These results suggest that prior experience and contextual knowledge is considered by teacher educators to have a greater influence on their assessment practices than specific preparation or induction, highlighting the role of professional judgement in shaping assessment decisions. Teacher educators were then asked to rate their confidence in relation to specified areas of assessment. The findings are presented in Table 5.3 and indicate a similar response pattern to associate teachers, whereby confidence levels are high across a range of areas, although 55% of teacher educators acknowledge that they have doubts about their assessment decisions.

Table 5.3

Teacher educators’ ratings of confidence in specific assessment acts

Specific assessment acts	No. of participants				Rating average
	Strongly agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)	
I feel confident in reaching assessment decisions	13	5	0	0	3.72
I feel confident in interpreting assessment criteria	12	6	1	0	3.66
Sometimes I have doubts about my assessment decisions	0	10	8	0	2.55
My skills in assessing student teachers has improved with experience	12	6	0	0	3.66
I feel well prepared to contribute to the assessment of student teachers	10	8	0	0	3.55
I feel confident in facilitating the assessment meeting	10	8	0	0	3.55
I feel confident in my ability to communicate with students	13	5	0	0	3.72
I feel confident in my ability to communicate with associate teachers	13	5	0	0	3.72

Note. $n = 18$.

Teacher educators were asked to identify how they conceptualised their primary role in the assessment of practicum. The question purposefully forced a decision between a formative and summative focus of assessment, to determine which focus had precedence. Similar to the results for associate teachers, 72% of the teacher educators ($n=13$) identified their primary role as *'assessing the student teacher to provide feedback, support and guidance for professional growth'*. Only 28% percent ($n=5$) selected *'assessing the student against required standards in order to determine suitability to graduate as a teacher'* as their primary role. Results reveal a similar trend as for associate teachers, with the formative purposes of assessment being given precedence. This emphasis on formative purposes supports the findings of Ortlipp (2009) and Ciuffetelli-Parker and Volante (2009) who suggest that teacher educators are committed to supporting the professional development of student teachers and that summative purposes are necessary, but secondary in importance. This finding is of particular interest in that other participants in the triad typically focus on the summative assessment responsibilities of the teacher educator (Goodnough, et al., 2009; Turnbull, 1999), suggesting a potential misalignment in expectations between institutional requirements, role and personal beliefs.

5.4. Description of the practicum assessment experience

The following section presents the responses to questions that asked participants to describe their experience of practicum assessment. Participants were firstly asked to identify the key words they would associate with the assessment of practicum, before providing a fuller description of the way in which they would define a successful assessment of practicum.

5.4.1. Global description

One of the initial questions posed to all participants was to ask them to choose three words that they would use to describe their experience of the assessment of practicum. Responses

were coded according to three categories: positive (e.g. *rewarding, helpful*), negative (e.g. *frustrating, unfair*) and neutral/ambiguous (see Table 5.4). This last coding was used for words where it was not possible to accurately determine the appropriate category. For example, the word ‘challenging’, could be interpreted as either positive or negative depending on the unknown intent of the participant.

Table 5.4

Orientation of description of participants’ experiences of practicum assessment

Orientation of response	% of responses			
	Student Teacher	Associate Teacher	Teacher Educator	Average
Positive	47	71	78	65
Negative	44	18	15	26
Neutral/ Ambiguous	9	11	7	9

As Table 5.4 indicates, the overall trend of the descriptions was oriented to a positive response. However, there was a greater positive response from both the associate teachers and teacher educators, in comparison to the responses from student teachers. This is likely to reflect that assessment of practicum is a higher-stakes experience for the student teacher. A further analysis considered the focus of the words selected by participants. The words chosen tended to fall into three categories – emotional, structural/procedural or professional. In illustration, a selected range of examples is provided in Table 5.5.

While this question specifically asked for comments in relation to the assessment of practicum, it would appear that some of the participants may have interpreted this more widely to comment on the practicum experience as a whole. One of the findings to emerge from this study was that assessment was not seen as a separate element of practicum, but was woven throughout the practicum experience in both overt and discrete ways.

Table 5.5*Examples of categorisation of descriptions provided by participants*

Category	Examples of responses		
	Associate teacher	Student Teacher	Teacher Educator
Emotive	Valuable Frustrating Rewarding Inspiring	Stressful Nervous Frightening Nerve-wracking Exciting Empowering	Exciting Rewarding Enjoyable Affirmation Uplifting
Process oriented	Time-consuming Discussion builds practice together for the mentee and mentor Not robust enough at times Lack of non-contact time	Relaxed Restricted time frame Great to receive positive feedback Supportive Constructive	Mentoring Responsive to the context
Professional identity	Personal and professional growth My way of sharing knowledge and giving back A learning experience	Probed further reflection of practice Reaffirming of my skills	Making a difference Professional development An opportunity to observe current practice in centres

The strength of the emotional responses indicated in answer to this question, as well as in other parts of the study, became an emerging theme in the study. While the intensity of feeling for students may be anticipated given the significance of the assessment outcome, results suggest that associate teachers and teacher educators also have strong feelings about this process, both positive and negative. While practicum assessment is seen as part of the professional role of teacher educators and associate teachers, these assessors are also engaged in a relationship with the other participants for the given period of time, which in turn draws on the affective domain – the feelings and emotions of participants. Such findings are similar to those reported by Hastings (2008), Moody (2009) and Mau (1997), who describe the affective response of triad participants to challenging practicum situations, and argue for the need for greater emotional support. Depth of emotion is further revealed in the stories of

success and concern that the participants chose to share in the survey, which are reported later in this chapter.

5.4.2. Describing a successful assessment of practicum

To gain a fuller description of the experiences of practicum assessment, participants were asked to describe a successful assessment of practicum. This was an open-ended question allowing participants to provide an individual, descriptive response. Analysis of each set of responses looked for key categories that indicated what was valued within the assessment process.

5.4.2.1. Student teachers

Analysis indicated that the positive characteristics identified by student teachers fell into three key categories: feedback, relationships and specific assessment practices. Overwhelmingly, the feedback that the student received from the associate teacher and the teacher educator was identified as the most critical feature of a positive assessment process, similar to the reports of student teachers in Haigh's (2005) study. Sixty-three (63%) percent of the student teachers specifically referred to the value of feedback in their description ($n = 60$). Students highly valued honest feedback that identified their strengths, and gave advice and support in areas of weakness. Students identified a strong sense of affirmation, empowerment and encouragement when someone in a position of influence could see strengths in their practice, as reflected in the following comment: *"After an observation I was told of good teaching practices I had shown: this led to me feeling more empowered and confident about my practice"* (WHA/ST/7).

Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the student teachers identified the importance of positive relationships to the assessment process. Student teachers seek positive relationships with

those who assess them (Moody, 2009), as they feel that conflict, or broken relationships may lead to unfair assessment feedback, and increase their vulnerability to subjective assessment decision making (Gulikers, Bastiaens, Kirschner & Kester, 2008). Positive relationships with associate teachers and teacher educators provided a safe space within which the students were able to receive the feedback given, as the following comments illustrate:

I trust and respect the lecturer a great deal, knowing she is a kind and fair person makes for a positive experience. (WHA/ST/1)

In one, I was familiar with the [teacher educator] and had faith that she had my best interests at heart. She noticed things about my teaching that I had taken for granted... and have used her comments on that practicum to build my skills ever since. (TAHI/ST/17)

Specific assessment processes were identified less frequently than the other two categories, but still provide a picture of practical steps that associate teachers or teacher educators took that were valued in the assessment process. One practical action mentioned related to with the way in which the assessor positioned themselves while observing the student: *“By sitting and observing at a distance rather than right next to me, it was a lot less intimidating than I expected because I was able to go about working with the children as I normally would in a much more relaxed way”* (TAHI/ST/16). Taking time to get to know the student, setting them at ease prior to the assessment, and encouraging them to be themselves were other factors identified.

5.4.2.2. Associate teachers

The descriptions of a successful practicum assessment offered by associate teachers portrayed a desire for practicum overall to be a rich, effective and positive experience that fosters growth in the student teachers' professional practice. This finding mirrors the emphasis on professional growth identified by associate teachers in Beck and Kosnik's (2000) study, as well

as Smith (2010). Ten of the associate teacher responses ($n = 18$) made reference to growth in professional practice as being the marker of successful assessment. In considering the role of assessment as a tool in this process, associate teachers highlighted the need for assessment to occur within an environment of positive relationships, respect and trust; to identify and support the student's strengths as well as areas of weakness; to consider the 'whole' student; and to be based on a shared understanding of the practicum requirements. Only three associate teachers ($n = 18$) made mention of the role of standards, criteria or competencies in the assessment process. Table 5.6 presents a selection of indicative comments from associate teachers that illustrate the characteristics identified.

Table 5.6

Characteristics of successful practicum assessment as identified by associate teachers

Characteristics	Indicative comments
<i>Positive relationships</i>	When the assessment is realistic and honest, and the student takes away with them encouragement and drive to keep learning and developing their practice. Mutual respect is a key thing here: a sound professional relationship and rapport must be developed very early on, giving the right to speak honestly without offence being taken. As a result, the student can be encouraged to step out into trying new things, take risks and meet challenges, knowing that they will be supported and encouraged to develop far beyond their own expectations (WHA/AT/1).
<i>Identification and support for strengths and weaknesses</i>	One which both supports the student's strengths and areas of greatest confidence while giving them the skills to build on areas which they may not be as confident or competent (TAHI/AT/2).
<i>Holistic assessment</i>	One that looks at the whole of the student's teaching practice participating in all areas of a centre (TAHI/AT/1).
<i>Shared expectations</i>	A successful assessment can only be successful if it is thorough and both parties understand the requirements and obligations (TORU/AT/12).

5.4.2.3. Teacher educators

The descriptions offered by teacher educators reflect similar themes to those identified by student teachers and associate teachers in the previous sections. The effective giving and receiving of feedback is seen as critical, both between the associate and student, and the teacher educator and student. Teacher educators seek openness and willingness on the part of students, demonstrating that they have taken the feedback offered and used this to strengthen their practice, as suggested in the following comment: *“... the student-teacher embraces the critical feedback and forward, and then later submits non-required evidence to show how they've been stimulated to explore and research further, grow and develop personally and professionally, and are starting to realise greater potential in themselves in the service of the children”* (TORU/TE/7).

Within this feedback process, the affirmation of strengths and support for areas needing growth is highlighted. One teacher educator defined a successful assessment as being *“one where all parties have a voice, strengths are identified, areas of development identified and professional enabling discussions had”* (TORU/TE/9).

An emphasis on assessment for learning is evident in the teacher educators' responses, with less attention given to the achievement of specified criteria. This is reflected in an individualised approach to assessment that looks at the growth and progression of the student during the course of the practicum. The following description encapsulates many of these elements:

One where there has been dialogue throughout the practicum, where the student has been open to feedback, where the AT has been supportive and there has been a good relation between the AT and student. Where there has been obvious growth in the student's learning throughout the period. Where

the student feels that they have achieved and where their understanding of difficult concepts have been realised. Where the student is able to discuss the practicum and relate to her academic studies. (TORU/TE/10)

5.5. Assessment philosophy

To develop an understanding of the rationale for assessment practices, participants were asked questions to identify the philosophical beliefs related to the purpose of practicum assessment. Participants were given a list of key assessment purposes and asked to rate them on a scale of most important, important or least important. Using these ratings an average rating score for each category was determined, which was then used to determine the ranking of categories from most to least important, as presented in Table 5.7. These results indicate a high level of similarity between the three participant groups in regards to their beliefs about the purpose of assessment. For all participant groups, the primary purpose of assessment is seen to be giving feedback to support student teacher's professional growth, followed by identifying the student teacher's strengths. Summative purposes of assessment, including meeting institutional expectations and regulations, and determining failure, were rated lower across all groups. One area of note is that student teachers (61%, $n=74$) saw 'showing students where they are not meeting expectations' as being of greater importance than teacher educators (25%, $n=20$), which suggests a discrepancy in the way in which participants view the purpose of assessment, with student teachers attending more to meeting summative outcomes of assessment (Allen, 2011).

Table 5.7*Average rating and average ranking of key assessment purposes*

	<u>Average Rankings of Items</u>			<u>Average Ratings of Items</u>		
	Student Teacher	Associate Teacher	Teacher Educator	Student Teacher	Associate Teacher	Teacher Educator
To determine if the student is ready to be a teacher	4	3*	3	1.58	1.55	1.65
To give feedback to support students professional growth	1	1	1	1.15	1	1.15
To show students their strengths as future teachers	2*	2	2	1.41	1.4	1.35
To show students where they are not meeting expectations	2*	3*	4*	1.41	1.55	1.75
To ensure the student is meeting the requirements of the institution	3	4	4*	1.96	1.85	1.75
To fail students who are not succeeding	n/a	5	5	n/a	2.35	2.2

Note. $n = 74$ for student teachers, $n = 20$ for associate teachers, $n = 20$ for teacher educators. Average rankings are based on the average rating scores. Ratings were scaled as 1 – *Most Important*, 2 – *Important*, 3 – *Less Important*. n/a applies when participants were not asked to rate the item. * denotes a tie in rank order

Responses suggest that teacher educators believe that the primary focus of the assessment may shift in accordance with the stage of study, or the perceived competence of the student, as captured in the following statement: *“When a student is working well in their practicum setting, I see my role as being primarily to give them feedback. When there are major problems, I have to do both: i.e. provide feedback, support and guidance BUT also benchmark strongly against the required standards”* (TAHI/TE/2).

Many of the policies and practices related to practicum are established at the level of the institution, as described in Chapter Four. Teacher educators and associate teachers were asked if their experiences of practicum assessment were in agreement with their own professional philosophy of assessment. There was a strong level of agreement, with 81% of associate

teachers ($n = 16$) and 94% of teachers educators believing that there was an alignment. However, where associate teachers did not perceive there to be appropriate alignment between their own philosophy and that of the institution, they made professional decisions about whether to continue their role with specific institutions, as captured in the following comment: *“Two of the institutions are in agreement with my own professional philosophy regarding assessment practice, two are not; I will no longer accept students from them”* (TORU/AT/11).

5.6. Assessment practices

A series of questions were used to draw out information regarding specific practices used in the assessment process. Participants were given a list of key assessment practices that might be considered in guiding assessment decision making and were asked to rate each factor as *Most important, Important, Less Important or Not considered*. The results are presented in Table 5.8, and reveal differences in the way in which student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators view the importance of different assessment practices. Observation was seen by both associate teachers (79%) and teacher educators (78%) to be the most important assessment practice, whereas for student teachers feedback from the associate teacher was rated most highly (70%). Feedback from other teachers in the early childhood setting was rated as ‘most important’ by 63% of associate teachers, compared to only 11% of teacher educators. Documentation, completion of task work, self-assessment and professional intuition were all indicated as being important considerations in assessment decision making. These findings mirror the descriptions of typical assessment practices in New Zealand, as outlined by Haigh, Ell and Mackisack (2013) and Turnbull (1999). There was also agreement across participants that feedback from the children in the centre was considered important, which is a practice given little attention in the research literature (Dayan, 2008), or in the institutional perspective as presented in Chapter Four.

Table 5.8*Ratings of importance of assessment practices*

Factors	% of responses											
	Most Important			Important			Less Important			Not considered		
	AT	ST	TE	AT	ST	TE	AT	ST	TE	AT	ST	TE
Observation of the student	79	44	78	21	46	22	0	10	0	0	0	0
Feedback from the associate teacher	n/a	70	50	n/a	24	50	n/a	5	0	n/a	2	0
Feedback from other teachers	63	27	11	32	47	44	5	16	39	0	10	5
Feedback from children	47	50	30	42	32	50	5	10	17	5	8	0
Documentation	47	22	39	42	58	39	11	18	22	0	2	0
Completion of required assessment tasks	47	47	30	53	39	55	0	13	11	0	0	0
Student self-assessment	32	43	44	63	42	44	0	13	11	5	2	0
Professional intuition	42	n/a	50	36	n/a	50	16	n/a	0	0	n/a	0
Portfolios	16	29	25	58	34	43	16	28	22	11	8	5

Note. Associate teacher (*n* =19) Student teacher (*n* =63), Teacher educator (*n* =18)

5.6.1. Methods of assessment

To gain a deeper understanding of the way in which teacher educators and associate teachers made use of the assessment practices identified in Table 5.8, they were asked to describe the method of assessment that they typically use with student teachers.

5.6.1.1. Associate teacher methods

Responses from associate teachers ($n = 16$) indicates that assessment begins with building a relationship with the student, supporting the student's entry to the centre, and then observing the student formally and informally throughout the duration of the practicum. On-going feedback, both written and verbal was deemed to be important in supporting students in areas of both strength and challenge. Professional conversations were also identified as playing an important role in assessment, supporting Grey's (2011) recommendations in relation to the value of professional dialogue in practicum. The following response is representative of the elements identified by associate teachers:

My method of assessment is based largely around the conversations I have with students. I like to support them in identifying their own strengths and challenges as well as use these opportunities to share my own experiences/growth with them. I like to use these conversations as a way of understanding where the teacher is coming from as well as provoke them further in their thinking or practices. I also like to provide regular feedback to their written documents. I assess students based on my own observations as well as feedback from other teachers. I believe that on-going feedback is vital so that there are no surprises at the final triadic.

(TORU/AT/7)

Only two associate teachers made reference to institutional criteria in describing the assessment process that they followed. Of note was that associate teachers made almost no

reference to the assessment visit or final assessment report writing in their description, but rather focused on the assessment practices that occurred throughout the duration of the practicum. This affirms the suggestion presented earlier, that associate teachers have a stronger emphasis on the formative purposes of assessment and see the teacher educator as holding the primary responsibility for summative assessment.

5.6.1.2. Teacher educator methods

The descriptions offered by the teacher educators focused primarily on the actions they followed in conducting the final assessment visit. Contextualisation of the early childhood setting and the individual student teacher were reported as being important foundations to the assessment process. The range of findings offers a composite picture of what might typically occur during an assessment visit. The visit begins with introductions between the key participants, followed by brief conversations between the associate teacher and teacher educator to determine the format of the visit and negotiate a time for later discussion. The teacher educator may ask the associate teacher to identify if there have been any concerns during the practicum. Depending on the involvement of the student teacher with children at the time, there may be a preliminary conversation between the teacher educator and student to gain an overview of the practicum, and to identify any areas of focus. When these preliminaries are complete, it is typical for the teacher educator to move into a time of observation, in which they watch the student engage with children and the wider context of the early childhood setting. Written notes are taken at this time, which may relate to specific institutional criteria, or may provide a more general description of the teaching practices observed. Teacher educators are looking for evidence of professional practice and growth, typically related to the learning outcomes or criteria of the practicum. At the end of the observation time, some teacher educators take a small amount of time alone to work on paperwork, while others will move directly into the triadic meeting, involving the teacher

educator, student teacher and associate teacher. This choice may also be determined by the availability of the associate teacher to come 'off the floor'. The key focus of the triadic is identified as being an opportunity for each member to comment on the strengths of the student, and provide supportive feedback in relation to areas for future growth, as well as to attend to specific institutional criteria that may be required. Some of the teachers educators will look at and comment on the student teacher's written work during the course of the visit, whereas others commented that this is left until after the practicum and is reviewed at the institution. The responses from teacher educators did not specify when or how the assessment outcome is communicated to the student.

The practices described here closely mirror those in New Zealand studies such as Turnbull (1999), suggesting the dominance of a clinical supervision model for the triadic meeting. Teacher educators have the greatest influence in determining the way in which the assessment visit will be enacted, as also found by Hegender (2010). However, while the descriptions of assessment practices suggest a formulaic approach to the assessment visit, teacher educators indicated that it was important that the assessment process be flexible and responsive to the needs of the student teacher and the early childhood setting, as reflected in the following comment: *'I adapt to the specific circumstances and interpret criteria broadly to support individual circumstances'* (TORU /TE/3).

5.6.1.3. Student teacher – self-assessment

While student teachers do not determine the assessment process, their contribution to assessment is intended to be captured through self-assessment measures. Student teachers were asked if they had been required to complete a self-assessment while on practicum; sixty-eight percent (68%) of respondents indicated that they had. The students were not required to specify the nature of their self-assessment, which would have been valuable in determining if

reflection was the key assessment method, or if more formal self-assessment measures were in place, given Boud's (1999) argument that reflection and self-assessment have different purposes, and that ascribing assessment purposes to reflection may limit a student's willingness to openly discuss challenges or areas of weakness. Table 5.9 presents the findings when student teachers were asked to describe their experiences of self-assessment. Student teachers were given pre-selected options for this question that allowed them to choose either a positive response, or the corresponding negative response. Not all respondents made a selection for each item, which is reflected in the totals.

Table 5.9

Student teacher beliefs about self-assessment experiences

Positive beliefs	% of responses	Negative beliefs	% of responses
Challenging	45	Simple	17
Valuable	38	Waste of time	12
I was too hard on myself	17	I was too easy on myself	3
It helped to improve my practice	26	It did not improve my practice	20
I felt confident in my self-assessment	17	I was not confident in my self-assessment	20
I liked being able to contribute to the assessment	41	I did not like being able to contribute to the assessment	7
I felt well prepared	14	I was not prepared	3

Note: $n = 42$.

The findings suggest that student teachers valued the opportunity to contribute to their assessment, and believed that it supported improvement in practice, however there was indication that students may be too hard on themselves and lack confidence in the self-assessment process, as highlighted by Keesing-Styles (2003) and Lew, Alwis and Schmidt (2009). When asked if practicum assessment *should* include a self-assessment from the student teacher, 85% ($n = 59$) indicated positive agreement, with a reported preference for written reflection (65%), verbal discussion (57%) and developing a portfolio (35%).

5.6.2. Assessment criteria

Participants were asked, 'should assessment be guided by pre-determined criteria/standards or by individual student goals?' There was a strong support from both associate teachers and teacher educators for the use of pre-set criteria with 74% of associate teachers ($n=19$) and 81% of teacher educators ($n=16$) selecting this option. The response from student teachers was more equivocal, with the majority (56%, $n=61$) believing individual goals should have precedence. The differences in perspective between the student teachers and those responsible for their assessment suggest that student teachers may not share the same commitment to, or understanding of, the role of pre-determined criteria. However, as with previous results that asked associate teachers and teacher educators to choose between formative and summative assessment purposes, it seems that the choice between pre-set criteria and individual goals is not a binary decision, and elements of both are likely to be present in each practicum. As one teacher educator explained in the open comments section of this question:

I believe that both the students' goals and the predetermined standards are important – i.e. we have to work across both without privileging either. If the goals have been signed off as realistic then they should bear some resemblance to what is expected within the predetermined standards. As long as the predetermined standards reflect what is 'wise practice' in ECE - we should be able to maintain this tension. (TAHI/TE/2)

The way that criteria are communicated, operationalised and interpreted appears to be of concern to participants, as one associate teacher commented: *"I have felt that the way institutions set out goals can be difficult to understand and the expectations of lecturers and our expectations are often very different"* (TORU/AT/4). As found by Beck and Kosnik (2000) and Haigh and Tuck (1999), there is agreement that shared expectations are important, but

not always achieved. Associate teachers in particular express concern, in suggesting that institutional criteria for practicum may not adequately address some of the professional skills or personal dispositions that they believe to be important, as represented in the following comment: *“Sometimes a student fulfils all the goals but may not necessarily be a good teacher”* (WHA/AT/1).

Teacher educators and associate teachers were asked to identify who they believed should be responsible for defining the criteria and/or standards that guided the assessment of practicum. Responses indicated a strong commitment to criteria being developed as the result of collaboration between the institution and other key stakeholder groups (including associate teachers), with 58% of associate teachers ($n=19$) and 50% of teacher educators ($n=18$) selecting this position. Unfortunately, participants were not asked to specify the other stakeholders they included in this category, which would have provided further clarity. The other theme to emerge was support for the role of a regulatory agency, such as the New Zealand Teachers Council, in providing standards that apply across institutions (37% of associate teachers, $n=19$). Comments indicate that participants believe that this would increase the consistency of expectations across early childhood initial teacher education programmes, and reduce the challenges faced by associate teachers who support students from more than one institution, as the following response suggests: *“different institutions have different criteria that the students need to meet, this can be a bit confusing to the associate teacher – I wish all the institutions followed the same curriculum and assessment for each student”* (TORU/AT/11). However, as Sadler (2005) states standards can be problematic as they must be shared, debated and mutually understood in congruent ways. Grudnoff, Hawe and Tuck (2005) argue that for standards to be effective in supporting the learning and growth of student teachers they must be embedded in a culture that is focused on professional learning and support teachers in identifying their own needs, rather than externally imposed.

5.6.3. Moderation, consistency and fairness

In examining the assessment practices used in the practicum, one of the areas explored was the reliability of the assessment act. Associate teachers and teacher educators were asked two questions in relation to the notion of fairness and consistency:

1. How do you ensure that your assessment of individual students is fair?; and
2. How do you ensure you are consistent in your assessment of different students?

The first question was intended to discover how assessors ensured their assessment was fair for individual students, whereas the second question was intended to capture how assessors ensured they were consistent across the range of students they may assess in a period of time. However, it appears from the responses that the questions were perhaps too nuanced in their differences, and the intention may not have been articulated clearly enough, and so the responses were not as discrete. Therefore, responses to the two questions have been collated together to provide an overall understanding of the ways in which teacher educators and associate teachers respond to concepts of fairness and consistency.

Analysis of these questions revealed that responses fell into two key categories: responses that focused on the intrinsic qualities of the assessor; and those that focused on external strategies at an institutional or practice level. There was a marked difference in the strategies identified by associate teachers and teacher educators. Associate teachers were more likely to rely on intrinsic qualities, with support from professional colleagues, while teacher educators demonstrated a stronger connection to institutional guidelines, and a commitment to informal and formal moderation.

5.6.3.1. Intrinsic qualities

The intrinsic qualities identified as supporting a fair assessment included maintaining a focus on the positive qualities and strengths of the student teacher, being open, honest, flexible,

empathetic and reflective. One of the associate teachers expressed these qualities in the following comment: *“Being open and honest and listening with an open mind, I am prepared to change my mind if the student is able to advocate for their actions or their beliefs/philosophy”* (TORU/AT/4). This approach was seen as an on-going professional commitment, and an outward expression of the personal and professional philosophy of the assessor. The importance of seeing the student in context within the assessment act was also affirmed by both associate teachers and teacher educators as contributing to fair assessment practices.

5.6.3.2. External strategies

Associate teachers and teacher educators also identified a range of external strategies that they would employ to support a fair and consistent assessment. These included using multiple sources in decision making, considering the context of the student and the centre, seeking consistency between perspectives, adherence to institutional processes, using established criteria as a benchmark, developing shared expectations and engaging in informal moderation processes. Open communication was seen as essential in enacting these strategies. Informal moderation for associate teachers involved discussion with other teaching team members and more senior teachers, as well as seeking feedback from the teacher educators they were working with. For teacher educators informal moderation took place in collegial discussions within their institution, as well as at team meetings.

Teacher educators were also asked specifically if they engaged in formal moderation of practicum assessment, with 50% ($n=18$) indicating that they had. In corresponding comments, one of the teacher educators indicated that formal moderation can be problematic, stating: *“We’re supposed to, but alas due to on-going heavy workloads it continues to be a challenge to factor in”* (TORU/TE/4). Another comment, that would appear to be from a teacher educator with responsibility for moderation, suggests concern that teacher educators may shape their

practices during moderation to please the moderator: *"I am wary of [teacher educators] who may act in the way they know I want to see during moderation and then slip back in to their own way thereafter"* (TORU/TE/8). Sixty-one percent (61%) of teacher educators ($n=18$) responded affirmatively when asked: 'have you ever been observed and given feedback on your assessment practice?' Associated comments provided by teacher educators indicated that this process had happened at the time of their own induction, or when responsible for inducting a new staff member.

To summarise, the findings parallel those of previous studies. Assessment is seen by associate teachers and teacher educators to be fair and consistent when it takes place in the context of positive relationships (Ferrier-Kerr, 1999), guided by the exercise of professional judgment (Joughin, 2009; Ortlipp, 2009), against the criteria established by the institution and other stakeholders (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000), considers multiple perspectives (Haigh, Ell & Mackisack, 2013) and is subjected to both informal and formal moderation. Responses from associate teachers typically reflect a greater orientation to internal factors, whereas teacher educators were more likely to identify external factors as guiding fair and consistent assessment practice. The data reveals some debate around visit allocation and whether a student should be visited by the same lecturer on more than one occasion. For some this is seen as a positive practice, in providing the opportunity for an on-going relationship that supports assessment through a greater understanding of the student. Others raised concerns, citing the need for multiple perspectives and the potential for bias if the relationship between assessor and student teacher is not positive. The following quote encapsulates many of these key elements:

I am fortunate that as a regional lecturer I continuously work with the same students in and out of practicum. This allows me to know them on a more intimate professional level thus affording me the ability to recognise their point of

difference from others which in turn serves a appoint of reference for me. I also check lecturer reports from previous [teacher educators] and go as far as checking notes on the student database. Often all of these contribute to me better understanding the differences between students and thus determining what I can only hope is a fair approach to assessing them.” (TORU/TE/4)

5.7. Assessment challenges

In order to illuminate the full experiences of the participants in practicum assessment, a section in the survey was devoted to identifying the challenges experienced in practicum assessment. In presenting the results in this section, an overview of challenges across participants is offered, followed by discussion that examines the individual perspectives of student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators. Results are then presented in relation to specific challenges that were explored in greater depth during the survey including bias, feeling silenced and disagreement over assessment outcomes.

The first question related to the challenges of practicum assessment provided a list of potential challenges and asked each group of participants to indicate which they had experienced. The combined results of this question are presented in Table 5.10. Findings indicate that the challenge most commonly experienced by both associate teachers (72%) and teacher educators (90%) was a difficult relationship between an associate teacher and student teacher. Surprisingly only 22% of student teachers reported that they had experienced this challenge, which may reflect that both associate teachers and teacher educators have participated in more practicum experiences than the students – some of whom have only had one or two experiences to reflect on. The high number of associate teachers and teacher educators who reported this challenge indicates that this is likely to be a significant issue.

Table 5.10*Assessment challenges experienced by participants*

Assessment challenges	% of responses		
	Student Teacher	Associate Teacher	Teacher Educator
A difficult relationship between the AT and the ST which influenced the assessment	22	72	90
A difficult relationship between the TE and the student	11	n/a	20
A difficult relationship between the AT and the TE	n/a	17	25
Feeling that contribution to the assessment was not valued	25	39	15
A disagreement between the AT and TE regarding the assessment outcome	14	17	15
Student disagreement with the assessment outcome	12	28	45
Uncertainty regarding expected outcomes for the stage of study	20	72	40
An unexpected negative assessment	17	n/a	n/a
An AT providing inaccurate or inappropriate assessment feedback	n/a	n/a	65

Note. Student teacher ($n = 64$). Associate teacher ($n = 18$). Teacher educator ($n = 20$).

For student teachers, it appears that the most commonly cited challenges relate to feeling that their contribution to assessment is not valued, uncertainty regarding the assessment expectations for their stage of study and receiving an unexpected negative assessment outcome, similar to the concerns noted by Caires, Almeida and Vieira (2012), Mau (1997) and Murray-Harvey, Silins and Saebel (1999). However overall, these areas are reported by only a small proportion of the student teachers in this survey; a sample group of only final year students who had experienced a greater number of practicums may have yielded different results.

For teacher educators, the other most commonly identified challenges were an associate teacher providing inaccurate or inappropriate feedback (65%) and a student disagreeing with the assessment outcome (45%). A high percentage of associate teachers (72%) reported that uncertainty regarding the expected outcomes for a student's stage of study was a challenge,

suggesting that further articulation and explanation of institutional criteria may be desired by this group; a similar recommendation to that offered by the associate teachers in Sinclair's (1997) study.

5.7.1. Challenges identified by associate teachers.

For associate teachers, key concerns most often related to implicit and explicit expectations for achievement, particularly in situations when their expectations did not match those of the institution. Associate teachers expressed a sense of frustration, and lack of understanding of the reasons behind the assessment decisions made at an institutional level. One associate teacher commented that: *"recently I felt that a student who was on their final practicum had not shown that she understood some of the basics that I would expect from a year one student. The comment was made by the visiting lecturer that she felt sorry for whoever then employed her, as the student had done 'enough' to pass her final year"* (TAHI/AT/3). This comment illustrates that associate teachers have their own set of expectations related to practicum, apart from those established by the institution. These expectations may align, or there may be discordance. Students may meet the practicum requirements in accordance with the institutions guidelines, but still not satisfy an associate teacher's expectations around the practices and dispositions required to move into the teaching profession. Dispositional factors appear quite significant in many of the associate teacher responses, for example: *"Another student told me that she didn't like young children, yet she was in her second year of training, and went on to do her third year... I spoke my concerns to her visiting lecturer, but as she 'passed' her goals, and fulfilled her written assignments, she continued despite her terrible attitude"* (WHA/AT/1). While Beck and Kosnik (2000) and McDonald (2005a) affirm the professional competence and contribution of associate teachers to assessment, Sinclair (1997) argues that associate teachers' reliance on personal expectations can serve to perpetuate existing practices and lead to idiosyncratic interpretations of assessment criteria.

Table 5.11 provides an overview of the other key concerns raised by associate teachers. The comments are provided in full within the table to illustrate the details of specific cases in the participants' own voice, as well as to reflect the strength of the individual responses. Common themes to emerge included feeling that their contribution to assessment was not valued, bias, lack of institutional support and disagreement around assessment outcomes.

Table 5.11

Assessment concerns described by associate teachers

Practicum assessment concerns	Illustrative comments
Contribution not valued	<i>During a triadic meeting my opinion was not asked for once. When I did try to join in I was 'talked over' by the [teacher educator]. This happened to be a senior [teacher educator] and I was made to feel intimidated by her. (TORU/AT/4)</i>
Bias	<i>One lecturer was biased and was hard out at a student that didn't deserve this. I had to complain to the institution because of the unfairness. I knew the student had passed but that wasn't the point. The point was that she deserved to be encouraged and not put down. (TORU/AT/3)</i>
Lack of institutional support	<i>When I needed help with a student and contacted the training provider and they took a week to get back to me, despite several calls, emails and messages left. Then they did not visit until the following Tuesday which was nearly two and a half weeks into the practicum. When they did come they removed the student from the centre there and then for counselling, but sent her back the next day thoroughly confused and not knowing what was happening. Unfortunately I had to fail the student as she did not interact at all with the children and did not do written work. I had difficulties with the same provider on two more occasions and will not take another student from them. (TORU/AT/11)</i>
Disagreement with assessment decision	<i>A student was seriously underachieving in her third year. I queried the possibility of her extending her practicum placement with us to ensure she met the outcomes to a satisfactory standard, but I was told by the [teacher educator] that she will still have two years of supervised guidance to become fully registered. I didn't agree with the decision but was not in a position to fail her when they were so adamant that she would be fine. I feel that even [teacher educators] at times are not being moral in their decisions and are as in this case giving the student the big tick to avoid further workload. This is very concerning. (TORU/AT/12)</i>

The results suggest associate teachers would value greater feedback from the institution when the outcome of the assessment is disputed in some way, and greater transparency around the assessment practices and rationale for assessment decisions. It is possible that for each of the situations described, the other participants would have a different perspective or explanation for the decisions made. However, it appears in each situation that there had been limited communication to resolve the concerns identified.

Some of the comments offered by the associate teachers reflect a significant level of concern, and in some cases, a very strong reaction in response. This is likely to be directed at the institution, as they question selection criteria (why a student has been given entry to a programme), assessment criteria (why a student is permitted to continue in a programme), as well as the way in which an institution responds to their expressed concerns. At the most extreme end, the anecdotes from the associate teachers reveals that some will choose to sever ties with an institution that they consider has not upheld their expectations.

5.7.2. Challenges identified by student teachers

Student teachers were also given the opportunity to describe a situation in which they had concerns about the way they were assessed. This was an open-ended question, allowing the students to tell their stories. The descriptions offered by student teachers revealed the depth of emotion, and difficulty that is experienced, when a practicum does not go well. The responses were at times very raw, reflecting hurt, anger, confusion and frustration, as the following comment reflects: *“Suffered verbal and physical abuse (physically manhandled by owner) and had no recourse as there are no regulations in place to protect the student from this type of behaviour. Training institutions do nothing as they require placement positions for future students”* (TAHI/ST/1). This was the only comment to suggest an abusive situation, but a range of other concerns were identified including relationship challenges, inconsistencies in

assessment, unanticipated or unfair assessment outcomes and concern over the support and opportunities offered in some early childhood services. The findings affirm the contention of authors such as Evelein, Korthagen and Brekelmans (2008), Murray-Harvey, Slee, Lawson, Silins, Banfield and Russell (2000) and Mau (1997) that students' experiences of practicum assessment are typically stressful, and can be problematic. The identified concerns are presented in Table 5.12 with a series of indicative comments that present the students' description of their experiences.

Table 5.12

Assessment concerns described by student teachers

Assessment concerns	Illustrative comments
Relationships issues – Associate Teacher	<i>It was my first practicum where my relationship with my associate teacher wasn't the best and lot of the teaching practices and the centre philosophy didn't sit well with me. This was a real struggle because my [teacher educator] didn't really help me work through these issues in a professional manner. (RUA/ST/2)</i>
Relationship issues – Teacher educator	<i>There was one assessment where the teacher educator turned up late without any communication. This meant she completely missed the activity I had specifically planned for her to observe (her request). It also left me feeling unsure as to if/when she was going to arrive and what I would be doing at that time. She sat very close which I found extremely intimidating and also made me feel like she was there to pick out everything I didn't do, rather than looking at strengths. Also, when she met with me (without my associate teacher) I felt like I was being given the third degree. In addition to this while I was leading a mat-time instead of observing me she walked away to answer a phone call!!! I do not believe the final report that seemed extremely critical was at all a fair reflection on what she observed or my teaching ability. (TAHI/ST/16)</i>
Inconsistency in assessment	<i>My [teacher educator] gave me a mark that was below the AT's mark, and there was no given reason. I would have appreciated a reason why a lower mark was given. (RUA/ST/1)</i>

Reduced opportunity to meet assessment requirements	<i>I did not feel I was given enough opportunity to participate in planning and this was reflected on in my assessment The standards I had to pass did not fit with the centre's policies or philosophy – I therefore received negative feedback as I was trying to fit in the centre's way of life. (WHA/ST/13)</i>
Feedback concerns	<i>In my 2nd practicum my AT gave conflicting feedback to my [teacher educator]. She had told me how great everything was that I was going, and then as soon as my [teacher educator] came she turned around and told her the complete opposite. (WHA/ST/44)</i>
Lack of associate teacher support	<i>I thought my AT wasn't as involved or as interested as she should have been if she accepted the AT role. I would have liked more interaction and feedback from her. This would have built my confidence a lot more. (WHA/ST/35)</i>
Concern about the quality of the early childhood centre	<i>My own opinion counted for nothing and I felt the centre was unsafe for under two's and could not tell anyone, as I was afraid the assessment would reflect negatively. (TAHI/ST/17)</i>

Relational issues were clearly evident in the descriptions provided by the student teachers, including their relationships with the associate teacher, teacher educator, as well as other teachers within the centre team. The comments indicate that student teachers have expectations of the support, guidance and positive interactions to be given by the associate teacher and teacher educator, and feel concerned when these expectations are not seen to be met (McGee, Ferrier-Kerr & Miller, 2001).

Student teachers saw their relationships with associate teachers and teacher educators as having considerable bearing on the ultimate outcome of the assessment process. In particular the on-going active presence of the associate teachers was seen as critical by students. Students reflected a sense of injustice when the associate teacher contributed assessment feedback without having been present throughout the practicum. *"In many of the practicums I have been on over the years, my AT was not present in the room the majority of the time. I did not see how she could assess me when she was not even there"* (TAHI/ST/8). The responses of

student teachers suggest that they see themselves as vulnerable to the opinions of the assessors, and that good relationships were equated with positive assessment outcomes, and poor relationships with negative assessment experiences. However, this is a somewhat simplistic proposition that minimises the role of professionalism and professional judgment in assessment practices (Joughin, 2009), and suggests that students may need reassurance as to the multiple perspectives that determine final assessment decision making.

There are also process elements that student teachers identified as having a bearing on the assessment outcomes. Some students felt limited by the opportunities they were provided within the practicum setting, for example to engage in planning, or setting up the environment. This created tension when the assessment requirements included such tasks. Student teachers stated that they appreciated when teacher educators identified and considered these constraints within their assessment.

Student teachers seek consistency in the assessment feedback from associate teachers and teacher educators (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005), and find it difficult to reconcile when there is a disagreement, particularly when the reasons are not explained. Student teachers also expressed concerns when they do not understand the actions or decisions of those who assess them, or when the assessment process appears to lack transparency. In illustration, one student teacher commented:

At the end of one of my assessments my teacher educator asked me which teaching standard I would like to fail. I was really shocked, and asked her to clarify. She responded by saying that [institution] doesn't like it when second year students pass all of the standards so she always picks one for them to work on. Knowing that I had shown competency in all of the standards and having evidence of this in my report book, filled out by the educator herself – this really upset me. I

felt that I had been stripped of the grades I deserved to serve a corporate paperwork purpose. (WHA/ST/25)

It is also apparent that the impact of assessment concerns can either be mitigated, or compounded by the support received from the teacher educator, associate teacher, or even other teachers within the early childhood setting. For example, when there is a difficulty in the relationship between the student teacher and the associate teacher the response of the teacher educator is significant in supporting the student teacher, as shown in the following example:

I cannot complain about the assessment from my AT because it never happened. However, having no assessment meant I had no idea how she felt about my work and what I could improve on. I believe she was not there enough to assess me. On the other hand, the TE was very helpful and spent extra time with me as she was aware of the situation. (TAHI/ST/2)

5.7.3. Challenges identified by teacher educators

Teacher educators raised a number of concerns within the descriptions that they provided, including the role of associate teachers, assessment feedback and documentation, and institutional processes and procedures. These concerns are presented in Table 5.13, with a series of indicative comments that capture the voice of the teacher educators.

Teacher educators clearly valued the role of the associate teacher, and viewed them as having a very significant influence in the practicum and subsequent assessment. However, teacher educators consider it problematic when they identify concerns in the way associate teachers carry out their role. Like student teachers, teacher educators shared concerns about cases where the associate teacher is not present regularly throughout the practicum, to gather

assessment information based on the students' daily practice in the setting, and to provide the feedback necessary to facilitate the growth needed to meet assessment requirements.

Table 5.13

Assessment concerns described by teacher educators

Assessment concerns	Illustrative comments
Associate teacher feedback	<i>One of the most common situations I have seen on several occasions is when the associate teacher has not spent a great deal of time with the student teacher and therefore has not been in a position to give accurate feedback to and about the student. They have relied on snippets of information from other teachers that may or may not be accurate, and this has affected the overall result of the student's practicum. Sometimes the student has been completely unsupported by the staff and has not had the opportunity to grow and develop as a result of this (RUA/TE/1).</i>
Bias	<i>The associate teacher had mono-cultural view and was in my assessment being racist about the student's ability. I terminated the practicum on the spot (TAHI/TE/1)</i>
Lack of documentation related to concerns	<i>When I have been to visit a student on practicum where quite clearly they are not up to passing the practicum or having specific areas signed off but the AT report does not highlight this, however the conversation with the AT did (TORU/TE/2).</i>
Quality early childhood settings	<i>A personal experience where a very caring and responsive mature student had struggled to continue with her [practicum] where she was witness to poor practice and children not having their basic needs met let alone having any extension to their learning. She had been in on-going contact with me throughout the placement and chose to stay as a role model and attempt to effect positive change rather than to give up and organise another placement instead. The AT was very aggressive in her manner to the student teacher, the children and myself – the triadic discussion did not take place as the AT refused to take part. Instead she formally complained to the institution and to Teachers Council re: the professionalism of the student teacher. This complaint was not upheld by the Teachers Council (nor the institution) but had a major effect upon the student teacher who almost left the profession (TORU/TE/8).</i>

The illustrative comments presented in Table 5.13 suggest that there are times that teacher educators call into question the appropriateness and authenticity of the assessment information that associate teachers provide. Teacher educators expressed concerns about situations in which there is a discrepancy between the verbal feedback and the written feedback given by associate teachers. They suggested that at times associate teachers will share concerns verbally, but do not want to commit to evidencing their concerns in the formal documentation, as this comment reflects.

The opposite situation was also reported, in which the verbal feedback is positive, and the final written documentation submitted to the institutions raises unexpected and unanticipated concerns, as the following comment illustrates: *“An AT gave a satisfactory korero on the student’s attributes at the time of lecturer visit, but when the final student report was received it was very scathing of student’s attitude and practice”* (WHA/TE/1).

At an institutional level, teacher educators raised some concerns around the procedures that surround the assessment process; as Haigh (2001) establishes, institutional policy and practice are significant in shaping assessment outcomes, at times against the judgement of the teacher educator. The challenges of workload were acknowledged by teacher educators, as they sought to manage competing elements of their role, as well as needing to visit a number of students within the allocated practicum timeframe. Teacher educators also raised concerns about the challenge of finding the time to meet with associate teachers for the assessment discussion, limiting the opportunity to share assessment feedback. The competing workload demands of the associate teacher and teacher educator at times make it difficult for the discussion to be held outside of times when children are present and the associate teacher is included in the teacher:child ratio. One teacher educator identified a situation in which she had concerns because a student had reached the final year of study and was not meeting

expectations and commented: *“my primary concern lay in the fact that on reviewing previous practicum documentation, I found the same evidence yet this was not picked up on by previous lecturers. My concern arose out of our ‘neglect’ in picking this up earlier and supporting the student earlier”* (TORU /TE/4).

Of note is that the majority of concerns identified across all participant groups were situated outside of the participants themselves. Concerns raised were focused on the actions of others, with little sense of acknowledgement or ownership of their own role in a given situation. While illustrative comments provide valuable insight into the challenging experiences of participants, they do only capture one side of the story and it seems likely that the other participants may have another perspective and/or rationale for their actions. The following section presents the results related to specific areas of challenge that were targeted in the survey; bias, feeling silenced, disagreement over assessment outcomes, and students at risk of failing.

5.7.4. Bias

Practicum occurs in the context of multiple relationships, and involves interpersonal activity. In acknowledging the subjective nature of assessment, the potential for bias must be explored. The survey participants were asked: ‘do you believe that there is the potential for bias to influence the assessment of practicum?’ Table 5.14 shows that all participant groups acknowledge the potential for bias to occur in the context of practicum assessment, with the strongest responses from teacher educators (84%) and associate teachers (74%). Student teachers were the least likely to agree with the statement (50%), with a much higher proportion of ‘unsure’ ratings (40%).

Table 5.14*Is there the potential for bias to influence the assessment of practicum?*

Participant groups	<u>Rating of agreement % of participants</u>					Rating average
	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Teacher Educator	42	42	6	10	0	4.2
Associate Teacher	21	53	21	5	0	3.9
Student Teacher	15	35	40	10	0	3.6

Note. $n=74$ for student teachers, $n=19$ for associate teachers, $n=20$ for teacher educators. Average rankings are based on the average rating scores. Ratings were scaled as 5 – *Strongly agree*, 4 – *Agree*, 3 – *Unsure*, 2 – *Disagree*, 1 – *Strongly disagree*.

Participants were then asked to move from their beliefs about bias to their actual experiences of bias in assessment. Seventy-two percent (72%) of teachers educators ($n=18$), and 56% of associate teachers ($n=18$) stated that they had experienced bias in the assessment of practicum. However, the response from student teachers was much lower, with only 16% of students reporting that they had experienced bias. These findings may reflect that associate teachers and teacher educators have had more practicum experiences overall to reflect on, and therefore more opportunity to have encountered bias.

To gain a deeper understanding of the perceived causes of bias, participants were asked to respond to the statement '*I believe that this bias was a result of*', selecting from a range of pre-identified options. As illustrated in Table 5.15, cultural and ethnic factors were most often identified, closely followed by language factors, supporting the contention of Nuttall and Ortlipp (2012) who have reported the challenges faced by culturally and linguistically diverse students in practicum experiences.

Table 5.15*Perceived causes of bias*

Causes of bias	% of responses		
	Associate Teacher	Student Teacher	Teacher Educator
Cultural or ethnic factors	38	60	67
Gender	0	0	17
Sexual orientation	0	10	0
Other personal characteristics	38	10	42
Physical characteristics	13	0	8
Personality clash	25	50	92
Language factors	37	10	50

Note. Associate teacher $n = 8$. Student teacher $n = 10$. Teacher educator $n = 12$. Participants could select more than one option.

Overall, sexual orientation was the least cited factor, with only one student teacher identifying this as a cause of bias. Participants were also given the opportunity to identify other areas of potential bias that was not presented. One student raised the issue of institutional bias – in which she felt she was discriminated against by an associate teacher as a result of the institution she was studying with. This finding aligns with the feedback from associate teachers that they can have strong feelings about an institution as a result of prior experiences.

Each participant group was provided with the opportunity to comment on potential practices that may be used to minimise bias in the context of practicum assessment. Collated results suggested that including improving communication, strengthening the triadic relationships, employing a diverse range of associate teachers and teacher educators, and fostering shared expectations were considered possible effective measures. The response to bias was seen to need addressing at both a personal and institutional level, however there was little reference to the wider systemic issues related to bias identified by Ortlipp (2006).

5.7.5. Feeling silenced

Following the lead of Ortlipp's (2003) work in Australia, participants were specifically asked 'have you ever felt unable to say what you want to say in an assessment meeting?' Fifty-three percent (53%) of associate teachers ($n=19$), 45% of student teachers ($n=64$) and 50% of teacher educators ($n=20$) reported that at times they have felt silenced in the assessment process. Participants were provided with a number of potential reasons for this silencing, and asked to indicate which were relevant to their choices. Results reveal that while the act of silencing is common across participants, the rationale for this may be very different. Table 5.16 presents the reasons identified by the different participant groups. Participants were able to provide more than one answer.

Table 5.16

Reasons identified for feeling silenced in the assessment

Reasons for silence	% of responses		
	Associate Teacher	Student Teacher	Teacher Educator
In order to maintain a positive relationship with the associate teacher/early childhood setting	n/a	66	73
In order to maintain a positive relationship with the teacher educator	0	24	n/a
In order to maintain a positive relationship with the student	64	n/a	18
I was concerned about the reaction of the student teacher	36	n/a	27
I was concerned about the reaction of the associate teacher	n/a	55	36
I was concerned about the reaction of the teacher educator	18	24	n/a
Time constraints	0	14	27
Because I was concerned about how I might be perceived	9	45	n/a
Because I felt my contribution was not valued/respected	55	28	0
Because I wanted to focus on positive outcomes	36	n/a	27
Because I found it difficult to give negative feedback to a student	27	n/a	0

Note. $n=29$ for student teachers, $n=11$ for associate teachers, $n=11$ for teacher educators.

The results suggest that maintenance of the relationships that are foundational to practicum was the primary reason that participants do not always say what they wish to say in the assessment. For student teachers is it important to maintain the relationships with the associate teacher (66%), more so than the relationships with the teacher educator (24%). Seventy-three percent (73%) of teacher educators indicated that they would hold back in the triadic to maintain the relationship with the associate teacher and early childhood setting, reflecting the importance of this on-going relationship for future students. Sixty-four percent (64%) of associate teachers indicated that maintaining a positive relationship with the student was their primary reason for being unable to say what they wanted to in the triadic meeting, whereas concern for the relationship with the teacher educator was not selected by an associate teacher. These findings suggest that the triad members prioritise relationships in different ways, but maintenance of these relationships is a significant factor in shaping what is said and not said in the triadic meeting.

Of note was that 55% of the associate teachers had felt unable to share what they wanted to in the triadic meeting because they felt that their contribution was not valued. This is in significant contrast to teacher educators, none of whom selected this reason. This finding may suggest that teacher educators are seen to have the dominant role in the triadic meeting.

5.7.6. Disagreement over assessment outcomes

Thirty-one percent (31%, $n=16$) of associate teachers, 61% ($n=18$) of teacher educators and 19% ($n=62$) of student teachers had experienced a situation where there had been disagreement over the final assessment outcome of a practicum. Respondents were asked to describe the steps that they took when a disagreement occurred. Communication was seen to be an important tool in seeking resolution; however responses indicated that members of the triad may not feel able or willing to pursue a disagreement further. Sometimes the situation

was left unresolved or led to a breach in relationship with the institution. Of the twelve students who responded to this question, ten chose not to pursue their concern, as reflected in the following comment: *“it didn’t seem worth it to challenge the lecturer and the organisation”* (WHA/ST/13). Three associate teachers reported that their concerns over a final assessment outcome had led to them no longer accepting student teachers from that institution, as described in the following comment; *“I had lost faith in the integrity of the institution, I did not trust it would make any difference. However, I have declined to take their students as a result. Another time I would perhaps write formally”* (WHA/AT/1).

5.7.7. Failing students

In Phase One of the study, the key informants at each institution indicated that it was possible to fail practicum, and that ensuring students met the required standards was a form of quality assurance for the programme. To investigate this further, the key participants were asked if they had experienced a situation in which the student was at risk of failing the practicum due to not meeting required expectations. Responses indicate that 89% ($n = 18$) of teacher educators and 59% ($n = 17$) of associate teachers had assessed a student teacher who was not meeting the expectations for practicum and was at risk of failing. Eleven percent (11%) of student teachers who responded to this question had themselves been at risk of failing. Each group of participants was then asked to select which strategies had been implemented when a student was considered at risk, as presented in Table 5.17.

Table 5.17*Strategies utilised when a student is at risk of failing a practicum*

	% of responses		
	<u>Teacher Educator</u>	<u>Associate Teacher</u>	<u>Student Teacher</u>
Additional visits to the student	100	89	43
Student given additional time to meet expectations	81	56	43
Student supported to set additional goals and strategies to meet expectations	75	89	14
A failing grade was awarded	63	22	0
Student was required to repeat the practicum	87	57	28
The student was required to spend longer in the early childhood centre	n/a	22	14
Teacher educator counsels students regarding their suitability for teaching	50	n/a	n/a

Note. Teacher educator, $n = 16$, associate teacher, $n = 9$, student teacher, $n = 7$.

Findings indicate that additional assessment visits to the student are the most common strategy implemented, closely followed by giving the student additional time to meet expectations, and support to set additional goals and strategies, findings which mirror the institutional response to failing students reported in Kane's (2005) review. Although not captured in the design of this question, it appears likely that a combination of these strategies may be utilised at the same time in order to support the student.

Teacher educators and associate teachers were then provided with the opportunity to describe the impact of supporting a student who was not meeting practicum assessment expectations and was at risk of failing. Comments reflected both a personal and professional response. On a personal level, associate teacher comments included words such as *anger*, *frustration*, *stressful*, *feeling like a failure*, *disheartened* and *disappointed*, while teacher educators used words such as *disappointed*, *deflated*, *stressful*, *draining*, *difficult*, *upsetting*, *tired* and *lots of emotion*. These comments reflect that those with responsibility for

assessment also have an affective response to challenging situations, as found by Hastings (2008). On a professional level, situations of potential failure are seen to be time-consuming, but an important part of the professional role of supporting the growth of potential teachers, as also noted by Siebert, Clark, Kilbridge and Peterson (2006). Associate teachers commented that they questioned whether they had done all they could to support the student (Hastings, 2008), while teacher educators reflected on whether the programme of study and support offered had disadvantaged the student in any way (Hawe, 2001).

5.8. Induction, preparation and professional development

The survey included a series of questions designed to examine if the triad members felt prepared for the assessment of practicum, and whether they wished for further support and/or professional development in this area. The following section presents the findings from associate teachers, teacher educators and student teachers.

5.8.1. Associate teachers

Associate teachers were asked to rate a series of statements in relation to their initial preparation for the role and then on-going professional development once an active associate. The findings indicate that less than half of the associate teachers had received extensive preparation in the area of practicum assessment, although of those who had completed this early training, 70% found it to be effective. Fifty-six percent (56%) of associate teachers ($n=18$) had participated in on-going professional development in the area of practicum assessment, with 62% of respondents indicating that this was effective. Findings suggest that a significant proportion of associate teachers may be engaged in the role with little or no training or on-going support. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of associate teachers then indicated that they would like further professional learning or support in the area of assessment of practicum. These findings parallel those of Beck and Kosnik (2000) and Sinclair (1997) who both argue that

associate teachers are underprepared and receive insufficient on-going professional development to support their role in assessment. When asked to indicate specific areas they would like included, support around understanding institutional expectations and assessment criteria, support in dealing with difficult practicum situations and guidance for mentoring skills were noted. Difficulty in attending meetings was identified by several associate teachers, with the suggestion that online training may be a valuable option to support easier access to the desired information. Beck and Kosnik (2000) identified resistance on the part of associate teachers to attend professional development, due to the primacy of other commitments in their teaching role. This concern was reflected in the responses in the current study, affirming the need to find alternative ways of inducting and supporting associate teachers in their role.

5.8.2. Teacher educators

Teacher educators were asked to identify if they had received induction support in preparation for their role in assessing student teachers, and if they had participated in on-going professional learning/development in this area. Unlike associate teachers, teacher educators were not asked in the survey to comment on the effectiveness of their induction and professional development, which would have provided a greater understanding of this area. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the teacher educators ($n = 18$) responded that they had received induction to assessment, and 59% had participated in some professional development related to assessment of practicum. Sixty-five percent (65%) of teacher educators indicated that they would like further professional development in this area, including more time for professional conversations, support for mentoring, and access to research. One teacher educator commented that: *"I feel strongly that the voice of the student teacher needs to be included within this PD as it is ultimately them I need to understand and respond to"* (TORU/TE/8).

5.8.3. Student teachers

Although the focus of preparation for student teachers is not the same as induction and professional development for teacher educators and associate teachers, it appeared valuable to capture some understanding of the way in which student teachers were prepared for the assessment process. Table 5.18 presents the student teacher responses to questions related to preparation for practicum assessment.

Table 5.18

Student teacher preparation for practicum assessment

<u>Preparation for practicum</u>	<u>% of responses</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Did you receive preparation for the assessment that would occur on practicum?	84	16
Did you know what to expect when the teacher educator came to visit?	86	14
Did you understand the criteria that were going to be used for the assessment?	81	19
Would you have liked further preparation for the assessment of practicum?	24	76

Note. $n = 59$.

Findings suggest that student teachers generally felt well prepared for practicum, and had a good understanding of the assessment visit and assessment criteria. Only 24% of student teachers responded that they would have liked more preparation.

5.9. Authenticity

One of the research objectives that guided the current study was to identify the factors that support authentic assessment of practicum. Participants were asked to identify how often they believed the assessment of practicum gave an authentic (accurate) picture of the student as a future teacher. Table 5.19 presents the findings, and indicates that on average, 70 % of participants believed authentic assessment to be achieved only 'some of the time'. This does not suggest a strong level of confidence in the assessment outcomes. One teacher educator commented on the notion of students putting on a performance while being assessed: ““/

would have to say that there are moments that I question whether students are doing the work that is required of them just to get a pass. Do they have opportunities to express their values/beliefs without fear of not passing the assessment?’ (TORU/AT/7). When looking at the results for the individual participant groups, it is apparent that teacher educators believe authentic assessment is achieved more often than student teachers do.

Table 5.19

Frequency rating of how often assessment gives an authentic picture of the student

Frequency	% of responses			Average
	Associate Teacher	Student Teacher	Teacher Educator	
All of the time	23	18	40	27
Some of the time	71	80	60	70
Never	6	0	0	2
Unsure	0	2	0	<1

Note. Associate teachers, $n = 17$, student teachers $n = 60$, teacher educators, $n = 15$.

Participants provided a number of suggestions as to ways that they believed the assessment process could provide a more authentic picture of the student teacher. These included increased number of and longer visits by the teacher educator, longer practicum experiences, inclusion of a greater range of voices including other teachers and children in the early childhood setting, use of more universally agreed criteria, making use of technology such as video, and improved communication and feedback. One teacher educator commented: “*I just wish I could think of a way to make it a less false situation when I have to go in to observe*” (WHA/TE/3).

The comments across all three participant groups suggest that authentic assessment is a result of ‘knowing’ the student teacher, affirming the importance of open, honest, meaningful

relationships between the triad participants. The following summary provided by a teacher educator reflects the significance of relationships in practicum assessment:

I believe this is where a relational approach to working with students is helpful.

When time is taken to get to know a student as a whole person and character is considered as well as teaching technique it is much harder for the student to put on an act, or conversely, they are less likely to be nervous. Building strong relationships between the teacher education institution and the early childhood centres is also essential as this enables honest professional conversations to occur which help all parties to be on the same page in regard to expectations.

Professional development for associate teachers where support is given and ideas for effective mentoring of student teachers are provided enables student teachers to be assessed more accurately. (RUA/TE/1)

This question also yielded some discussion around the value of a ‘home-centre’ practicum, in which students are assessed in a centre in which they have a regular and on-going role, and where relationships are established over a longer period of time. Some teacher educators felt that assessment in such settings provided a more realistic sense of the student in the teacher role, but this was not an issue explored in depth, so it is not possible to draw conclusions.

5.10. Summary

This chapter has presented the results from the online survey distributed to student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators at each institution providing illumination of the assessment experiences of these triad members. The focus of this chapter was to address the second research objective: “*to critically examine the beliefs, perceptions and experiences of key stakeholders in the assessment of practicum*”. Key findings indicate that practicum assessment can be a rich source of support and affirmation for student teachers, when enacted in the

context of positive practicum relationships (Caires & Almeida, 2007; McDonald, 2005a).

Associate teachers and teacher educators adopt a range of practices to support the assessment of practice, with observation and professional discussion the primary tools.

Multiple evidence points are typically considered in reaching assessment decisions (Haigh, Ell & Mackisack, 2013; Turnbull, 1999), which rely heavily on the professional judgement of associate teachers and teacher educators (Joughin, 2009; Ortlipp, 2009). Practicum assessment is also revealed as problematic (Haigh, 2005), with potential for relationship concerns, bias, inconsistent assessment outcomes and silencing of assessment participants. The anecdotes shared by participants reveal the depth of feeling that is associated with challenges in practicum assessment and suggest the need for greater support and opportunity to resolve concerns (Hastings, 2008). The following chapter presents the final piece of the picture, the findings of the case study conducted at each institution. The focus is on the interpersonal plane of practicum; the relationships between the student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator that provide the context for practicum assessment.

Chapter Six - The Interpersonal Plane

6.1. Introduction

Previous chapters have examined the assessment of practicum from an institutional and individual perspective. In this chapter the role of the triadic relationships and interpersonal relationships are foregrounded. This chapter presents the findings of the final phase of the study, a case study from each institution that examined the way in which the assessment of practicum was enacted and experienced in the context of relationships. The results of this phase of data collection attend to each of the key research objectives of the study in providing further understanding of the way in which practicum is assessed across settings, the assessment experiences of the key participants, and the factors that are identified as supporting authentic assessment. The chapter begins with an overview of the sample, data collection and data analysis procedures utilised for this phase of the study, before presenting an analysis of the case study results in accordance with the key themes of the study.

6.2. Description of methods

6.2.1. Sample

The sample group for this phase was one nominated practicum triad from each institution, comprising a student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator. Selection of participants for this phase of the research raised issues in relation to access and privacy, which shaped the way the recruitment process was conducted. It was initially considered that those who completed the online questionnaire could choose to nominate themselves for potential inclusion in the case study phase. However, it was necessary for all three members of the practicum triad to freely agree to participate, which raised issues in relation to accessing and contacting the other members of the potential practicum triad, which were not readily available. For this reason, it was negotiated that each provider would seek out a potential

triad, and having sought their permission, would pass on the contact details. The institutions were provided with information sheets and consent forms to distribute as they felt would best work within their practicum protocols (see Appendix F and H). Some institutions discussed the study with students face to face, while others made contact via email; others approached interested teacher educators first. The only parameter provided for selection was that the student teacher needed to be in the final year of their study, and considered likely to succeed in the practicum. This parameter was instituted to protect potentially vulnerable students.

6.2.2. Data collection

The data collection for this phase involved three components. The first step was that I attended the final assessment visit alongside the teacher educator, and was permitted to be present at and to audio record the triadic assessment meeting. Formal observation data was not collected during the visit itself; but I was present for the duration of the visit so that I would understand the context of the subsequent triadic discussion.

The second step in data collection was an interview with each of the triad members shortly after the triadic assessment meeting was complete. This interview provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on their experience of assessment during the practicum. As with the key informant interviews reported in Chapter Four, a general interview guide approach was adopted. A list of key topics was identified prior to the interview (See Appendices O, P and Q) and provided to the participants so that they would be aware of the intent and scope of the interview. The guided interview prompts were checked as the interview progressed to ensure each topic had been covered. As the end of the interview approached the list was checked to determine if any areas had been missed. As noted by Johnson and Christensen (2012), this approach to qualitative interviewing supported a conversational and situational approach. Following the interview a transcript of the individual interviews and the triadic meeting were

returned to participants for review, and to correct any possible errors. Each participant then signed and returned a transcript release form (see Appendix J).

The final set of data collected in this phase was the written assessment documentation. As part of consent to participate, the members of the triad agreed to provide copies of the written assessment reports, as well as any other supporting documentation that they felt would be valuable for consideration. Following the practicum, copies of all formal assessment reports were received, including the associate teacher report, the teacher educator report, and self-assessment completed by the student. Two of the teacher educators also provided a copy of the observation notes that they had completed during the practicum.

6.2.3. Data analysis

6.2.3.1. Analysis of the post-assessment interviews

The recordings of the interviews were reviewed on two occasions to become familiar with the content. The transcripts of the interviews were then used for manual analysis against the themes of the study, as outlined in Table 3.1 (p. 96). The transcripts were printed with a large right hand margin, and as each transcript was reviewed notes were made when content related to a theme, and key quotes were highlighted for inclusion in the results.

To allow for analysis across institutions, a matrix was developed on large sheets of paper. There was a column for each institution, and then key themes listed down the side. Interviews were analysed case by case, making notes in each cell, related to how the student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator had responded to the key themes. This was a valuable process, as this enabled analysis of the key themes within an individual case, but also across the cases, highlighting points of similarity and difference.

6.2.3.2. Analysis of the triadic assessment meeting

The transcripts of the triadic assessment meeting were analysed in two different ways. The initial analysis searched the transcripts for connections to the key themes of the study, as outlined in Table 3.1 (p. 96). Notes were made in the transcript, and then added to the analysis matrix to provide further information.

A further analysis of the transcript was conducted to discover the nature of the feedback given to the students in the assessment meetings. As described in Chapter Two (pp. 35-36), Randall and Thornton (2001) offer a model of feedback based on Heron's (1990) Six Category Intervention Analysis, which can be applied to the development of student teachers in the context of practicum. Heron's framework divides feedback into two broad categories - Authoritative and Facilitative - which are further explicated in six specific 'intervention' types (prescriptive, informative, confronting, cathartic, catalytic and supportive) that may be apparent in feedback sessions such as the triadic, described in Table 2.1, p. 36. These categories formed the guide for the analysis of feedback within the triadic assessment meeting. Each transcript was manually coded to identify examples of each category of feedback, allowing inference to be drawn as to the nature of feedback given to the student teachers by both the teacher educator and associate teacher in the course of the meeting.

6.2.4. Presentation of the findings

As with the other phases, there were a number of potential options for presenting the results, including by case, by participant group, or by theme. To support coherence throughout the study, the decision was made to present the findings according to key themes, collating the findings across the four cases. This approach supported an understanding of the similarities and differences between cases. Key quotes have been included throughout the results to reflect the narrative of participants and illuminate the responses to key themes. Coding is used

in presenting the quotes to identify the site of the case study and the role of the participant. The following format has been used for coding: (Institution pseudonym/participant role/source of quote/page number: line numbers). For this phase, there were two possible sources of quotes: the interviews with the participants, coded (CASE); and the triadic assessment meeting, coded (TRIADIC).

6.3. Overview of the case studies

Table 6.1 presents an overview of the four cases studies, identifying characteristics related to the participants, the practicum structure, the assessment outcomes, the triadic relationship and the contextual factors that were significant in each case. The cases represent a diverse range of students, associate teachers and teacher educators, and each case presented a unique perspective to understanding the experience of practicum assessment. As it was not intended to identify individual participants, specific demographic data was not collected. However, where this has been shared within the context of the data collection, it has been summarised and included in the case study description. Some identifying features have not been included as they were too identifiable to specific participants or institutions, as noted with an * in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1*Overview of case study characteristics*

	Tahi	Rua	Toru	Wha
Student	Female, 25-35 years, NZ European	Male, 40-50 years, NZ European. Retraining from a previous career.	Female, 25-35 years, NZ European.	Female, 20-30 years, NZ European
Associate Teacher	Female, 30-40 years, NZ European. Experienced early childhood teacher. Has had 3-4 previous students as an associate teacher.	Female, 40-50 years, NZ European. Experienced early childhood teacher. Has had 5 previous students as an associate teacher.	Female, 30-40 years, NZ European. Experienced early childhood teacher. Has had 3-4 previous students as an associate teacher.	Female, 40-50 years, NZ European. Experienced early childhood teacher. Associate teacher for a number of providers in the region.
Teacher Educator	Female, 10+ years experience as a teacher educator. *	Male, 5 years experience as a teacher educator. *	Male, 5+ years' experience as a teacher educator. *	Female, Experienced teacher educator (unspecified). *
Practicum Details	Final practicum *	Final practicum *	Final practicum *	Penultimate practicum *
Relationships	Positive, no conflict identified.	Positive, no conflict identified.	Positive, no conflict identified, however some tension in the triadic in relation to assessment outcome.	Positive, no conflict identified.
Visit	Took place at the end of week four. Two hours long. Only one visit during the practicum, although some prior phone communication.	Took place at beginning of week five. Approximately two hours long. Two earlier visits have taken place in the early weeks of the practicum.	Took place on the last day of the practicum. Approximately 2 hours, 15 minutes long.	Took place during week four. Approximately three hours long.

	Tahi	Rua	Toru	Wha
Final Outcome/ Grade:	Pass. Criteria – All marked by teacher educator as ‘advanced’, marked by associate teacher as falling between ‘proficient’ and ‘advanced’.	The associate teacher recommended a grade of Excellent for teaching practice. The final grade given by the teacher educator was; Teaching Practice: Excellent, Teaching Folder: Very good. Overall grade – Excellent.	The associate teacher recommended a grade of ‘Achieved’ for teaching practice. The final grade given by the teacher educator was ‘not yet achieved’ pending submission of additional written requirements following the practicum. All criteria met.	Pass. All criteria marked as ‘met’.
Contextual Factors	The setting was an innovative public kindergarten with a special character; the centre and its practices were the focus of much discussion during the assessment meeting.	The associate teacher was unwell and unable to attend the majority of the assessment visit. She joins at the end of the visit to provide some brief feedback and receive some feedback from the teacher educator. The student teacher has completed a previous practicum in the centre earlier in his study, and has chosen to return here for his final practicum.	The centre follows a specific educational philosophy, which shapes the practices that are expected of student teachers. This provides the focus for contribution of the associate teacher.	The setting for the practicum is specifically for children aged under two years. They apply the principles of attachment based learning (ABL) to their practices with children. The student is being visited by a teacher educator with an institutional role of supporting bi-cultural practice. The student is not well on the day of the visit.
Defining feature	The collegiality of relationships, with a focus on dialogue around teaching and learning, with less explicit discussion of the practices of student teacher or connection to assessment criteria.	The use of the teacher educator’s observation to critique teaching and learning and elicit reflection from the student teacher.	The emphasis placed on encouraging a good student teacher to achieve even further in her knowledge and practice.	The emphasis placed on supporting the student teacher’s bi-cultural development, as well as the way in which assessment practices are clearly articulated to the student.

6.4. Relationships

The intent of this phase was to foreground the interpersonal plane (Rogoff, 2003) of practicum assessment, in order to illuminate the way in which the relationships between the student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator influenced the assessment of practicum. Caires, Almeida and Vieira (2012) argue that research must acknowledge the affective and relational elements that underpin the practicum and shape the way in which assessment is enacted in the context of the triadic relationships. In each of the four cases, the participants reported overall positive professional and personal relationships between the triad members. There was no expressed break-down of relationships, or conflict between the participants. Comments made in two of the cases indicated the relationship between the associate teacher and student teacher would continue past the end of the practicum, an outcome of the friendship and mentoring relationship that had developed.

6.4.1. Relationships – Case Tahi

Of the four cases, Case Tahi overtly demonstrated the strongest relationship between the triad members, in particular the relationship between the student teacher and associate teacher. The student and associate had not met prior to the practicum, but they stated that they had built a strong rapport very quickly within the five week practicum. The student and the teacher educator had known each other from contact at the institution, but the teacher educator had not previously visited her on practicum. It was the teacher educator's first visit to this setting. The student teacher commented that this had been the "*closest relationship I've had with an AT*" (TAHI/ST/CASE/3:6) and one that was highly valued. The triadic meeting for this case was the most collegial in tone throughout the meeting, with the greatest inclusion of shared discussion related to teaching and learning. However, the outcome was that this triadic had the least emphasis on specific assessment feedback to the student teacher. The student teacher and associate teacher express a shared excitement and passion about the learning

taking place for the children in that setting, and this became the focus of a significant portion of the triadic meeting. The dialogue in the triadic, supported in the later interviews, reflected that the associate teacher and student teacher had clearly built a strong relationship that spanned both professional and personal dimensions. The student teacher viewed the associate teacher as a mentor, and the associate in turn valued the opportunity to support and mentor a future teacher. When the teacher educator entered into this relationship at the time of the assessment visit she received a warm welcome, and joined with the existing dyad in a way that responded to their excitement about learning. Very little of the dialogue in the triadic meeting related directly to the formal assessment of the student teacher, however within the dialogue the student teacher revealed a lot of information about her teaching practices and developing philosophy of teaching and learning. This emerged organically from within the dialogue rather than being specifically elicited by the teacher educator. The relationships in this triad were supported through an emphasis on affirmation, which was not only directed at the student teacher – each of the members of the triad openly affirmed each other during the course of the triadic meeting, with comments related to their role.

6.4.2. Relationships – Case Rua

In Case Rua, the interviews and assessment meetings reflect less emphasis on the associate teacher/student teacher relationship, although comments made during the interview indicate that the relationship was considered positive and supportive. Relational elements, such as personal comments and affirmations, were much less frequent than in the other cases, although each of the participants commented that relationships provide an important context for the practicum. The student teacher in this case commented: *“You can’t really take information from someone else unless you’ve got that relationship and they know where you are from. And I’m fortunate that in most of the lecturers, I’ve formed that relationship”* (RUA/ST/CASE/10:1-3). Discussion related to relationships in this triad tended to be less

emotive, and related more to the qualities that each person brought to their role, rather than the personal connection between participants that was evident in other cases. The student teacher's choice to return to this setting and the associate teacher after completing an earlier practicum further suggests the relationship was seen to be beneficial and positive. There were two factors that may have been significant in shaping the nature of the relationships, and the way that they were expressed within this triadic. Firstly, the associate teacher was unwell, and therefore not present during the assessment visit. The assessment meeting thus became a discussion between the student and teacher educator. This discussion was much more directive and less relational than in the other cases, which may not have happened if the associate teacher was present. The other factor that may be significant was that the teacher educator and student teacher were both male and of a similar age. Although the teacher educator had not previously assessed the student on practicum, they had an existing relationship both within the institution and their wider social context, which may have influenced their dialogue. These factors were not able to be analysed in depth within the parameters of this study, but are noted for their potential significance.

6.4.3. Relationships – Case Toru

In Case Toru, the teacher educator had taught the student within the programme and had previously visited the student on practicum. In their conversations within the triadic meeting, and informally during the duration of the visit, there were references to past shared experiences, and there was a sense of familiarity based on these. This pre-existing relationship came to influence the way in which the assessment was enacted. From his prior knowledge of the student teacher, the teacher educator commented that he held high expectations of her practice and was aware of the student's own high expectations of herself. As a result, a pattern evident within the triadic meeting was for the teacher educator to affirm the strength of the student teacher's practice, but then to push the student a little further through the questions

he asked and further tasks he suggested. The teacher educator explained in the interview that this approach reflected his belief in the competence of the student teacher, but as a result the student teacher was awarded a grade of 'not yet achieved', even though the associate teacher and teacher educator had discussed the high level of the teaching practice demonstrated, and the required assessment criteria were met. The student was required to submit additional written work that the teacher educator felt would be beneficial for her future practice, before the grade would be changed to "Achieved". The student teacher commented in the interview that she found it challenging to understand why she could not immediately pass the practicum when she believed that she had shown all the required evidence to a high standard.

The student teacher and associate teacher in this case had developed a strong positive relationship within the short three week time frame of this practicum. The teacher educator noted this in particular, commenting on the way in which they finished each other's sentences, and supported one another within the triadic; both a personal and professional connection was evident. Following the triadic meeting, the associate teacher indicated that she felt the need to protect and comfort the student, and to help her mediate the feedback and assessment outcome. As described by Bradbury and Koballa (2008), while on the surface the relationships in this triad were positive and supportive, there was some underlying tension between members. This was acknowledged by the teacher educator in the follow-up interview. He felt that this may have been a result of the research process; however, the student teacher indicated that for her, this was likely the result of her feelings about the outcome of the assessment.

6.4.4. Relationships – Case Wha

In Case Wha, developing a relationship with the student teacher even within the three hour time frame of the assessment visit, was very important to the teacher educator as an outward

expression of her professional philosophy. Although it would be typical for students at this institution to be visited by a teacher educator that they knew within the teaching programme, circumstances had meant that the teacher educator and student teacher had not met prior to the visit. The teacher educator acknowledged these circumstances, and took time at the beginning of the visit to establish a rapport, in particular through inviting the student to share information about herself:

So, not knowing her prior to the visit... I know [the institution] so I had something familiar to hang my experience off, and so part of not knowing [the ST] was about OK, how am I going to get to know [ST] in this short time. So that's the place I started from basically, eh, when I went in. And that's the place I started from, right from where I knew her. (WHA/TE/CASE/2:6-10)

This relationship building was facilitated by the use of a meeting time with the student prior to the observation period, a strategy not used in the other cases. During this time the teacher educator shared some information about herself, and asked the student questions about herself and the practicum in order to develop an understanding of the student and the context. This approach illustrated the commitment expressed by teacher educators in studies such as Doxey (1996) and Field (2002) that assessment be individualised to the needs of the student, and attend to the context of the assessment.

The associate teacher and student teacher spoke highly of each other during the triadic meeting and in the interviews, with the student stating she felt supported, encouraged and affirmed within the early childhood environment. The associate teacher in turn, expressed her enjoyment in the personal connection she had developed with the student, as well as the professional contribution that the student had made through becoming part of the team and sharing ideas; a finding frequently cited in research related to the associate teacher role (Beck & Kosnik, 2000). The associate teacher also highlighted the importance of the wider team

relationships beyond the triad, appointing the student a buddy teacher for the times when the associate teacher was not present on the floor.

6.4.5. Power in the triadic relationships

I think the power's with me.... because I have the ultimate call on the grade. I do tend to let what the associate teacher says and writes influence how I give the grade for teaching. And then, I think, there's very little power with the student... So if you ask me to rank the power, then it's me, the associate teacher, and student last. (RUA/TE/CASE/13:14-18)

As noted by Bloomfield (1997), the nature of practicum, and in particular the assessment function, has the potential to create hierarchical relationships and raise issues of power and control between participants. In three of the four cases, there was a clear sense that the teacher educator was perceived to have the ultimate responsibility for leading the assessment visit and determining the assessment outcome, as also found by Murphy and Butcher (2009) and Mitchell, Clarke and Nuttall (2007). The student in Case Wha comments that *"I think, in my mind, the lecturer [TE] holds my life in her hands! (laughs).... The AT contributes to it, but I think at the end of the day..."* (WHA/ST/CASE/8:19-21). However, this was not noted by the participants as being of concern, or diminishing the relationships between the triad members. There was a sense that this model is typical, expected and accepted.

In Cases Rua, Toru and Wha, the triadic meeting and the assessment processes were distinctly led by the teacher educators. The other participants were given opportunity and invited by the teacher educator to contribute their perspective, and this was respected and valued, but the control remained with the teacher educator, who had the most voice in the meeting. However, in Case Tahi the dynamics were quite different, with the overall tone of the visit and assessment meeting being more collegial. The teacher educator allowed the triadic meeting to

evolve as led by the discussion of the student teacher and teacher educator, offering comment at times throughout. The dialogue was rich and detailed, however it was much less focused on assessment and feedback to the student teacher than in the other cases. Much of the discussion did not relate to the student teacher at all, but discussed the learning and teaching programme within the overall centre setting. It could be argued that the greater equality of participants in this context had a cost in relation to the focus on assessment outcomes.

The teacher educator in Case Wha articulated the strongest commitment to empowerment of the student teacher across the four cases, as reflected in her comment:

I try and get our student involved as well [in the triadic] so that they can feel like this is not about them, this is with them. You know, they're very different – not about you as a... two power-houses assessing you, this is about what does [the ST] really think about, and how did she perceive what was happening...

(WHA/TE/CASE/14:8-11)

Throughout the visit, this teacher educator made a number of direct invitations to the student teacher to both contribute to and even guide the visit. However, on most occasions this opportunity was not taken up by the student and the decision making remained situated with the teacher educator for the most part. This raises questions in relation to the student teacher's sense of agency in the assessment process (Roberts & Graham, 2008; Turnbull, 2003).

The research of Ortlipp (2005) and Nuttall and Ortlipp (2012) established the potential for 'silence' within the practicum assessment, in which participants feel that they cannot, or should not, share all that they would wish to in the assessment process. To explore this issue, in the follow-up interviews each participant was asked if they felt that they were openly able to share within the assessment meetings. In all cases, the participants indicated that they had

been able to say what they felt was important, and affirmed the belief that openness and honesty were deemed to be key elements in their philosophy.

However, although the participants report that they were not silenced, there was evidence that the student teachers chose not to challenge assessment feedback that they disagreed with, and felt that they needed to defer to the role of the teacher educator. This was most significant in Case Toru. Although the teacher educator and associate teacher agreed that the student teacher had achieved the institutional criteria to a high standard, and the associate teacher had advocated for a grade of 'achieved', the teacher educator made the final decision to award a grade of 'not yet achieved' and required the student teacher to submit additional written work post practicum. Both the student teacher and the associate teacher had concerns about this outcome, but did not raise this with the teacher educator. After telling the student the grade outcome, and indicating the work that he is seeking, the teacher educator asks, *"how do you feel about that?"* (TORU/TE/TRIADIC/42:4) to which the student replies, *"Yeah, good"* (TORU/ST/TRIADIC/42:5). She gives no indication that this outcome is a shock to her, or that she disagrees with the position he has taken, even though she indicates this to be the case in the subsequent interview. The student comments that she felt that it was inappropriate for her to challenge the decision of the teacher educator. The associate teacher explained her decision not to challenge the decision as being that the teacher educator had provided reasons and that the final decision making rested with him. She did not wish to engage in conflict: *"... that's not my kind of background to... someone who is higher qualified, or someone who's, you now, been around the block so to speak, has more knowledge and understanding"* (TORU/AT/CASE/9:15-19). This scenario supports Robert and Graham's (2008) assertion that student teachers employ tactical compliance in their relationships with assessors, and defer to those seen to have the power in assessment decision making.

6.4.6. Personal anecdotes

One of the ways in which the triad relationships were facilitated was through the sharing of personal information and anecdotes. In the triadic meetings for cases Tahi, Rua and Wha, both the associate teacher and teacher educator shared stories of their own student experiences, their families, their study journey, and their experiences as teachers. These anecdotes helped to shift the dialogue in the assessment meeting from the professional to the personal, establishing connections and oftentimes helping the student to relax and engage with the person, rather than the role they represented. While the use of anecdotes and personal references is not explored in the practicum assessment literature, it can be seen as a strategy to enhance the triadic relationships (Doxey, 1996; Ferrier-Kerr, 2009) and support mentoring between participants (Graves, 2010).

6.5. Assessment processes and practices

The teacher educator at Wha commented that it is important for the processes of assessment to be clearly articulated, stating: *“So, a student cannot... be expected to be empowered if the assessment processes are not transparent for them”* (WHA/TE/CASE/6:10-11). In the following section the specific assessment processes and practices adopted in each case are explored, illuminating the way in which such processes are experienced by the three key participants within the context of the triadic relationship.

6.5.1. The associate teacher

Associate teachers adopted a number of descriptions of their role, including mentor, supporter, encourager, protector, advocate, role model, advisor and mother. These metaphors were very similar to those reported by Haigh (2001). The assessment elements of their role were considered important, but secondary to the task of supporting and encouraging the student's growth on practicum. This conceptualisation of role is highly relational and aligns to

notions of formative assessment. The associate teachers in these cases described their assessment role as to watch and listen closely, provide on-going supportive feedback, and provide a big picture of the student teacher's practice to the teacher educator, mirroring the description of the associate teacher role presented by Beck and Kosnik (2000). These findings support Coll, Taylor and Grainger's (2002) position that the associate teacher and teacher educator role in assessment are complementary, with each participant contributing a different perspective of the student teacher. Associate teachers believed that their feedback was important and valued in informing assessment decision-making, but believed that the final responsibility for assessment decision making resided with the teacher educator within the institutional framework (Mitchell, Clark & Nuttall, 2007; Murphy & Butcher, 2009).

While the formal data collection for this phase took place at the time of the final assessment meeting, for the associate teacher the assessment process had been on-going throughout the practicum, as the following quote suggests: *"I've been assessing [her] all along really, informally mostly and with her, lots of dialogue with her, and then we've had a couple more formal meetings off the floor and in my office"* (WHA/AT/CASE/2:13-14). By the time of the meeting, the associate teachers had already gathered extensive information about their student teacher for contribution to the assessment discussion and documentation. For the associate teacher, assessment was seen to begin from the first moments of the practicum, with the relationship between the associate teacher and teacher educator seen to be the starting point of the assessment: *"...when they first come in I don't go straight for the paperwork side of things and what they have to achieve. I like to get a feel of who they are and how they're interacting with the children.... To get an understanding first before diving into the documentation"* (TORU/AT/CASE/2:10-13).

As described by Haigh, Ell and Mackisack (2013), Power and Perry (2002) and Turnbull (1999), observation was considered by all of the associate teachers to be central to their assessment practice. Most observation was informal, as the associate teacher worked alongside the student teacher in the day-to-day life of the centre, as well as in shared teaching experiences. The associate teachers in Cases Rua and Toru reported during the interview that they also made use of formal observations, whereby they took written notes during an identified observation period and then shared these written notes with the student teacher to facilitate feedback. The associate teachers identified the purpose of observation as guiding informed feedback to the student teacher. At times feedback was immediate, given to student teachers when they were within a teaching situation, or shortly thereafter. Associate teachers reported that other key times of feedback were the beginning and end of the day, as well as designated associate/student meetings. The associate teachers commented that their feedback to the student was predominantly verbal in nature, although two associate teachers indicated that they provided the student with written feedback over and above the documentation required by the institution. Each of the associate teachers also noted that they sought out and considered the feedback of other teachers in the setting in undertaking their assessment.

Although the assessment literature typically positions formative and summative purposes of assessment as being in conflict (Tillema, Smith & Lesham, 2011), the associate teachers in these cases considered the formative and summative elements of the assessment process to be holistic and complementary: *"I kind of see it [assessment] holistically, really. Supporting them is,... does that make sense,... assessing them.... I'm helping them along the way, and then assessing how they've done"* (WHA/AT/CASE/19:20-22). Observation led to feedback that was designed to support the students' practice in the on-going moments of the practicum, but also formed the basis for the final summative report that each associate teacher would provide (Pullman, 1995). Working with the student teacher as they completed the institutional

practicum task requirements and engaged with assessment, planning and evaluation was also considered important in collecting assessment evidence that supported the final report writing. Differences were evident in relation to the way in which each associate teacher addressed the completion of the student's final summative report. In Case Wha, the associate teacher added to the report throughout the time of the practicum: *"I'm thinking about the report really quite early"* (WHA/AT/CASE/14:18). Others did not write anything in the report until the completion of the practicum.

6.5.2. The teacher educator

The summative assessment of practicum was seen by all participants as the predominant responsibility of the teacher educator, although their role in affirming and supporting students was also viewed as essential. However, during the interview, the teacher educators themselves placed less emphasis on the summative purposes and saw their role as including mentoring, supporting relationships, resolving conflict, affirming practice and providing feedback to facilitate growth: *"...it doesn't matter who the student is, the job is to support them and find out where they are, and what's happening for them, and give them opportunities I guess to make sense of what it is they're doing and why they're doing it, really"* (WHA/TE/CASE/2:2-4). The findings suggest that teacher educators define their role in multiple and complex ways (Haigh, 2001) and in ways that may not align with the pre-conceptions and expectations that other participants have of them. Enhanced collaboration between the participants within the overall teacher education programme and practicum, may allow participants' definition and division of roles to be interrogated and redefined (Sinclair, 1997).

Across the four cases there were many similarities in the way in which the teacher educator conducted the assessment visit. Relational elements were the primary focus as the first part of all visits, as the teacher educator established connections with the student teacher and

associate teacher. As the teacher educator from Wha commented: “...*when we go to the centre the first thing I usually do is always make sure that I’m going to connect with the people in the centre*” (WHAT/TE/CASE/4:16-17). This typically included general small talk, sharing of contextual information about the day, and outlining of the process of the visit. In some visits this was led by the teacher educator, while at other times the student teacher took the lead in introducing the teacher educator to the others in the setting. In some instances, this initial connection also included other adults and, less often, the children in the setting. This initial time was seen as important by teacher educators in establishing an understanding of the relationships at work within the practicum, as well as any significant contextual factors for the setting. The assessment was seen to begin from the time of arrival, as the teacher educator informally observed the way that the student teacher interacted with those in the early childhood setting and conducted the welcome and introduction process. These actions were seen to evidence criteria related to the personal characteristics and professionalism of the student.

Following these initial relational processes, the visits generally moved into a phase of formal observation of the student teacher, typically using a clinical supervision approach (Turnbull 1999). It appeared that this was expected by all participants and there was little negotiation around the procedure. As the student teachers in these cases were in their final stage of study it may be that this had become a tacit understanding of expected assessment practices. However in contrast, as described earlier in section 6.4.4 (pp. 223-225), the teacher educator in Case Wha began the visit with a more formal conversation that included outlining the nature of the visit and the process that would be followed, as well as collecting assessment information from the student in relation to specific criteria. During this time the student was given the opportunity to negotiate with the teacher educator around how the visit would be conducted. In the subsequent interview, this teacher educator explained that this was a

specific practice that she adopted, to allow her to connect relationally to the student, to empower the student, to alleviate initial fears and nervousness, and to gather baseline information from which to determine the focus of her observation. The teacher educator believed that this initial time revealed a lot about the student and the way in which the practicum was progressing, commenting that: *"It gives them their voice, so the more they're able to articulate and explain to me, the better and more comfortable I feel about the assessment"* (WHA/TE/CASE/6:17-18).

In all four cases formal observation of the student teacher was the primary assessment measure, consistent with the descriptions of assessment offered by Turnbull (1999) and Haigh, Ell and Mackisack (2013). Each teacher educator observed the student teacher (within a range of thirty minutes to one hour) while the student was 'on the floor' engaging in the daily practices of the centre. While observing, each teacher educator made notes, sometimes directly onto institutional assessment documentation or alternatively as a separate record of its own. Some of these observations were written as running records, writing detailed notes as events unfolded. Other teacher educators adopted a more narrative style, and wrote summaries of the observation period with feedback and commentary included. In three of the cases it appears that the observation notes were for the teacher educator's purposes, and were not given to the student. In Case Wha, however, the student was given a copy of the observation notes to keep as part of the overall assessment documentation.

In three of the cases, there had been minimal contact between the teacher educator and the student teacher prior to the visit, other than to organise the date and time of the final visit. Participants in these cases did not report any on-going communication or sharing of documentation prior to the visit in support of the assessment process, although the data from the key informant interviews in Phase One suggests that this was a possibility. In contrast, in

Case Toru, the student teacher and teacher educator had been in contact via email during the course of the practicum, and the teacher educator had read reflections and task work written by the student prior to the visit, and referred to and commented on these materials during the assessment meeting. While email and sharing of materials between the teacher educator and student teacher is not an institutional requirement, it is a practice that the institution has been promoting, as described by the key informant in Chapter Four.

6.5.3. The student teacher

Student teachers indicated that they saw their role in the assessment process as somewhat limited, but focused on the need to show themselves as competent in meeting assessment expectations – to provide the evidence that the teacher educator and associate teacher are looking for: *“My role is just showing him that I’m competent, like I’ve got to show him in all my aspects, like my written and my practice”* (TORU/ST/CASE/2:16-18). This comment supports Harwell and Moore’s (2010) argument that student teachers are primarily focused on performance during practicum. It was apparent in each case that the student teachers felt they needed to act in specific ways in order to garner the approval of those who assess them, and were strategic in their decisions around performance during the teacher educator’s observation time. The teacher educators and associate teachers also saw the students’ role as primarily evidentiary: to show the assessor their knowledge, skill and competence in the areas deemed important in the formal criteria and informal expectations:

She [the ST] gets to bring what her experience in the centre has meant for her, what she feels her growth has been, what she’s learnt along the way, and who... get into the practice of articulating the theories and teaching, the pedagogy that she has been using, and yeah, give the appraiser a bigger picture of how she’s becoming a teacher. (WHA/AT/CASE/7:10-13)

In the post assessment interview, one area explored with the student teacher was their expectations and understandings of the processes of the assessment visit. In three of the four cases, the assessment process was not explained by the teacher educator, but each of the students indicated that the visits followed the general form that they had been anticipating. In their final year of study, it appears that the four student teachers had a tacit understanding of the general process that would be followed – expecting a time of observation, to share their documentation and reflection and to engage in a triadic meeting, utilising the triad supervision model as described by Turnbull, (1999), although the order and form that would be followed was unknown. As one student teacher commented:

I wasn't really sure exactly how it would go, because I've had different, like the order of how things happened have been different in my assessments before. So, I wasn't sure whether we would kind of have a chat and then he would observe me.... and whether we would have a triadic or whether he would talk to my associate without me... I knew there were a handful of things that could happen, but I wasn't sure exactly what would happen. (TORU/ST/CASE/1:11-16)

In the interviews, the student teachers revealed that they entered the assessment visit with pre-conceived ideas of what the teacher educator would be looking for, and the 'performance' that they should give. At times, these pre-conceptions were based on the student teachers' knowledge of the specific teacher educator, as shown in case Rua where the student comments:

He [is] definitely a harder marker... I wonder if he is looking for something slightly different, and I've kind of keyed with the other lecturers, what they're after, but with [TE].... I'm still trying to work out what he actually wants... With the others I can know that they're, just what they're looking for. [TE] does things slightly differently, and so I don't really know what he's after. (RUA/ST/CASE/3:14-16)

At other times, the student teachers' practices during the assessment visit were shaped by their understanding of institutional expectations. Student teachers were aware that there were practices that were emphasised by each institution as being important, often reflected in the learning outcomes or assessment criteria. During the interviews the student teachers admitted to being intentional in demonstrating particularly valued practices. This was illustrated in Case Wha, where the student teacher knew the emphasis placed by both the lecturer and institution on bi-cultural practice, and so made this a focus in the practice that she demonstrated during the observation period.

... in my head I was just like, 'got to speak Te Reo, got to speak Te Reo, every second word's got to be Te Reo.' And then in my head doing the painting, I was like, 'I've actually got to talk about other things with the children, like what they're doing, what they're experiencing.' I was like, 'Where's the line? I'm focusing too much on trying to come across as this big Te Reo speaker, and I was kind of forgetting about using the language for the children while they were painting and, yeah, it was like a little light bulb moment during my visit. (laughs) (WHA/ST/CASE/5:6-11)

In all four cases, the teacher educators indicated that they wanted to see the student teacher engaging in the typical life of the centre, and did not necessarily have an expectation that the student would prepare a specific activity or teaching moment for the observation period.

However, each of the students stated they often felt that this was necessary or expected, and so undertook specific activities with the children including pre-planned art experiences (Tahi, Toru, Wha) and mat-times (Tahi, Rua), even when this might not have been the choice they would have made if not being observed. These findings suggest that student teachers are focused on the summative outcomes of assessment and make performance choices that they feel will support a favourable outcome (Mau, 1997). A focus on summative assessment

appears to foster student teacher conformity (Goodnough, et al., 2009) and use of tactical compliance (Roberts & Graham, 2008) in order to present what students deem to be desired practices to meet assessment requirements. The student teachers appear to be making their own interpretations of what the teacher educator expects to see, which are not in alignment with the educator's own beliefs, suggesting the need for greater transparency and open communication to prevent uncertainty and confusion (Haigh & Ell, 2014).

6.5.4. The triadic meeting

Following the observation phase of the visit, in all cases the triad of student, teacher educator and associate teacher moved into a formal meeting. A triadic meeting took place in three of the four cases, and would have occurred in Case Rua as well, but it was precluded by the illness of the associate teacher. A triadic meeting appears to be accepted practice across the four institutions, in alignment with the processes identified in Chapter Four.

At times the triadic meeting required negotiation in relation to the ability of the associate teacher to 'come off the floor' – ensuring that requirements for ratios within the early childhood setting continued to be met. One teacher educator commented to the student teacher: *"I've got half an hour, so I think maybe we need to get [AT] in, because she'll go into a mad rush with the lunches and the team going off"* (WHA/TE/TRIADIC/24:7-9). At times the need to wait for the associate teacher created a pause in the visit, which was filled with informal dialogue between the teacher educator and the student teacher. The location of the meeting also needed to be negotiated, which raised issues in some settings where there was not a dedicated quiet space. The meetings were typically held in offices or staff rooms although in Case Rua, the teacher educator and student teacher met in a public entranceway where there were couches for parents. Such locations meant that there were disruptions at times with both children and adults coming into the space. The result was often a pause in the

dialogue in order to protect the privacy of the conversation, which at times appears to alter the potential flow of the conversation during the triadic. While these issues were visible in the transcripts of the triadic meetings, they were not subsequently mentioned in the interviews as being of concern. Such interruptions are arguably accepted as a normal part of life in the early childhood centre environment.

The triadic assessment meetings ranged from 1.04 to 1.15 hours in length. In Case Rua, the assessment meeting between the teacher educator and student teacher lasted for 29 minutes. No participants expressed any concerns around the time taken for this meeting. The structure and flow of the triadic was established and led by the teacher educator in each of the cases, and each was enacted in quite different ways that reflected the style of the teacher educator, as well as the relationship dynamic of the triad. Case Tahī was the most conversational and personal in tone. This triadic was led by dialogue around the teaching and learning that was occurring in the early childhood environment, and how the student teacher had engaged with, and become part of all that was happening for the children. At one point the associate teacher brought out the planning and evaluation materials of the centre, and the conversation focussed on projects and interests that had been explored in recent weeks.

In Case Rua, the student teacher/teacher educator meeting that took the place of the triadic was led by the observations that the teacher educator had recorded. During this meeting, the teacher educator read through his observation of the student teacher point by point, offering comment on the practices that had been observed, information regarding different perspectives that could be considered, and posing questions that required the student teacher to explain and justify the teaching choices made.

In Case Toru, the teacher educator drew on his observation of the student teacher and her written documentation as a platform for the assessment discussion, as well as referencing his prior knowledge of the student teacher. During this triadic, the associate teacher played an important role in providing contextual understanding of the practicum setting, but gave limited feedback in relation to the student's teaching practice.

In Case Wha, the institutional criteria and associated documentation provided the structure to the triadic. The teacher educator had the institution's assessment form in front of her during the meeting, and worked through the assessment criteria point by point, marking off and writing comments in relation to the criteria that she had observed, and asking questions of the student teacher and the teacher educator as times when she needed evidence of achievement.

Analysis of the triadic meeting and subsequent interviews suggests that the triadic meeting served multiple assessment purposes, and that the balance of these purposes shifted according to the specific case. These purposes included facilitating relationships (Ferrier-Kerr (2009), contextualising the assessment (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000), collecting assessment information and then sharing assessment feedback (Copland, 2010; White, 2005, 2007, 2009).

One function of the triadic meeting was to facilitate the relationship between the participants, as well as the early childhood settings and teacher education institutions that they represented. The transcripts reveal relational dialogue that was intended to set participants at ease, build connections and establish a positive platform within which the student teacher was open to receiving assessment feedback. However, while the relationship between the student teacher and others was the immediate focus, there were also interactions that were intended

to foster future on-going relationships between the early childhood setting and the institution. A key example was in Case Tahi, where the teacher educator talked with the associate teacher about bringing students to visit the setting as part of the teaching programme. There were also a number of instances in Cases Tahi, Toru and Wha, in which the teacher educator explicitly affirmed the practices of the early childhood centre and the teaching team, as well as the way in which the associate teacher fulfilled their role. Such affirmation was arguably designed to build relationships and pave the way for future collaboration between the early childhood setting and institution, frequently cited as a desired outcome for enhancing the practicum experience (Grudnoff & Williams, 2010).

The triadic meeting offered the opportunity for understanding the assessment of the student teacher in context. Most often, this involved the associate teacher offering clarification of the specific context of the early childhood setting, and highlighting ways that this may have influenced the student's achievement of required criteria. One illustration of such contextualisation was in Case Wha. This centre had a very specific protocol and some limitations around the role of the student teacher in the care routines of infants/toddlers and connections with their families. This context limited the ability of the student teacher to meet some of the institutional criteria for the practicum. The associate teacher recognised this and commented that: *"I find sometimes with [teacher educators] that our programme's quite different, and sometimes it's getting their understanding up to speed as well...before they can get a good picture... perhaps the students are doing this because we do it this way"* (WHA/AT/CASE/8:11-15). In providing an understanding of contextual factors to the teacher educator, the assessment documentation was able to reflect the specific situation. Such contextualisation was also evident in Cases Tahi and Toru, where the associate teacher felt that it was important to provide information during the triadic meeting that provided the

teacher educator with specific knowledge of the philosophy and practices of the early childhood setting.

The triadic meeting served a dual purpose in relation to assessment; both collecting and disseminating assessment information. In each triadic meeting, the teacher educator asked questions of both the student teacher and associate teacher that were designed to explicitly gather information related to demonstration of assessment criteria and desired practices. Teacher educators acknowledged that the triadic was an important time for them to flesh out more information than they were able to gather within their observation period, and in doing so to honour the contribution of the student and the associate teacher to the assessment process. As well as collecting assessment information, the triadic was also the site of assessment feedback to the student teacher, and the opportunity for the student teacher to provide a response, although this opportunity was not always taken. Given that the teacher educator in each case was positioned as having the most power, the lack of student response may reflect the risk of voice and use of silence in the triadic meeting, as described by Nuttall and Ortlipp (2012) and Ortlipp (2003). Within the triadic meeting the teacher educator is actively synthesising the assessment information from all sources, and providing an overarching summary to the student. The data reveals the assessment to be a dynamic, responsive process (Joughin, 2009).

Some of the triadic meetings also evidenced the opportunity for 'feed-forward' (Hattie & Timperley, 2007) in which the student teacher was given guidance for future practice, sometimes related to the present practicum, at other times focused on the student's move into the sector, post-graduation. In Case Wha, the student teacher had not had the opportunity to complete assessment of children in the form of learning stories, and so the teacher educator negotiated with the associate teacher for this to happen in the final week of

the programme. Feed-forward from the teacher educator did become more problematic however, when the assessment visit was scheduled for very late in the practicum, such as in Case Toru, when the visit occurred on the last day.

One of the follow-up interview questions asked participants about their feelings and emotions during the triadic meeting. Student teachers reported a high level of nervousness and anxiety leading into the assessment visit, although they reported that these feelings lessened once the visit was underway and they had connected with the teacher educator in a positive way. Fear of failure and the high stakes of assessment at this stage of their study were acknowledged. In Case Wha, the student teacher describes her feelings as '*a big mess*' and '*dying inside*' but tries to mask this as she enters the visit: "*I try to hide it with smiles and me talking*" (WHA/ST/CASE/3:9). Affirmation and reassurance from the teacher educator in the early part of the visit was critical in supporting a reduction in the anxiety felt by the students, mirroring the findings of Murray-Harvey et al. (1999) and Ligadu (2005). Such feelings of anxiety and nervousness appeared to be an accepted part of the visit experience and student teachers stated they find ways to manage or reconcile these feelings. In Case Tahi, there is a point in the triadic where the teacher educator comments that she was nervous about the visit too. This comes as a surprise to the student teacher, who viewed the teacher educator through the lens of her role, rather than as a person.

6.5.5. Feedback in the triadic

As the triadic serves as a key point of feedback in the assessment process, one of the analysis measures was to examine the nature of the feedback given to the student during the triadic meeting. As described in Chapter Two, Heron's Six Category Intervention Analysis (1990, as cited in Randall and Thornton, 2001) provided the framework for analysis of the transcripts of the triadic meeting. The categories for analysis were operationalised according to the

descriptions provided in Table 2.1 (p. 36). Analysis reveals very different patterns across the four cases in the nature and balance of the feedback provided.

In Case Tahi, both the teacher educator and associate teacher placed a primary, almost exclusive, emphasis on *supportive* feedback, affirming the quality of the characteristics and practices of the student teacher. The associate teacher and teacher educator were in agreement that the student had achieved highly during the practicum, which forms the foundation of the feedback given. At no point during this triadic was feedback given that served a *confronting* or *catalytic* purpose.

In Case Rua, the teacher educator most often provided feedback categorised as *confronting*, with *supportive* and *informative* feedback interspersed throughout to affirm and promote the student's practice. In this case, the teacher educator adopted an approach in which he walked through his observation of the student step by step, identifying the teaching strategies that had been observed, and asking the student to justify and explain the teaching choices that he had made. As the student offered his reflection, the teacher educator would then provide further information to support the student's understanding, sometimes theoretical, and sometimes practical. This approach was quite different to those used in other cases. This feedback was the most strongly focused on identifying and critiquing the student teacher's current practices, and developing future teaching practices. This approach encouraged the student teacher to engage in active reflection at a high level.

In Case Toru, *supportive* feedback played a key role, but was often delivered in tandem with feedback categorised as *confronting* or *catalytic*. This reflects a model wherein the teacher sought to affirm the student teacher's current practices, but also to challenge her further as she prepared to enter the sector. The challenge in this case arose in the way in which the

student teacher received and interpreted the feedback given. In the post-triadic interviews, it is apparent that while the teacher educator believed the student teacher's skills to be at a high level, the student took the feedback as indication that she was not yet good enough, and this challenged her confidence and image as a teacher.

Of the four cases, Case Wha included the most instances of *informative* feedback. The teacher educator in this case held a specific position within the institution to promote bi-cultural practice, and so took time within the triadic to promote the student teacher's understanding around bi-cultural practice. As with the other cases, feedback offered was then clustered in the *supportive*, *catalytic* and *confronting* categories. The teacher educator affirmed the student's practice throughout the triadic, but also asked specific questions that were designed to challenge the student and provoke thinking. At times these questions were very direct, and the student teacher acknowledged in the interview how challenging she had found them to be. In these moments it appears that the student became uncomfortable and nervous, with shorter, less comprehensive responses, until the conversation moves on and there is affirmation and encouragement again. Table 6.2 presents some exemplars of the types of feedback utilised in the cases and how they were ascribed to Heron's (1990) categories.

For student teachers, the affirmation of their practice by both associate teachers and teacher educators was clearly the most significant and positive feature of the assessment process. Student teachers valued the reassurance of being told that they are doing well in their teaching role, and having their strengths acknowledged by someone they respect and/or consider to be an expert. The student teacher in Rua indicates that it was the affirmation that he gained from the assessments of his practice that had encouraged him to continue in the profession, and had helped to shape his view of himself as a teacher.

Table 6.2*Examples of types of feedback utilised by teacher educators*

Categories of Feedback	Indicative comments
Prescriptive	<i>(TE) To continue, be involved in what's going on and really explore those things you are interested in (TAHI/TE/TRIADIC/49:8-9)... (AT) [and build] resources (TAHI/AT/TRIADIC/49:11)</i>
Informative	<i>So Vygotsky is really good because he's contextualised, but for us here in Aotearoa, we need to remember that that was a model that was developed in Russia... so, we do have our own home grown models as well, that have the child at the centre, in the way that we work things, and we've got other theorists around the world who do the same thing as well. Yeah, it's just about [ST] developing her understanding about who she believes works with your philosophy. (WHA/TE/TRIADIC/5:1-10) Absolutely. As she said, it must reflect the context, the socio-economic background, all those in your community and the children you're serving – so many factors. (TORU/TE/TRIADIC/16:14-15)</i>
Confronting	<i>And you sort of just laughed that off and said 'Yes I am' – tell me why you didn't actually, first of all, why you said that, and then why you just let it go rather than extend on that, because there was some good opportunity there with him. (RUA/TE/TRIADIC/2:4-6)</i>
Cathartic	<i>So, it's actually had an impact on you, that first practicum. (TAHI/TE/TRIADIC/2:16)</i>
Catalytic	<i>How do we know and how do we recognise when a child understands something, or we've extended their thinking? Yeah so, is that something you've thought about when you're working with tamariki? (WHA/TE/TRIADIC/21:14-16) OK. So what's the growth that's come out of that for you, apart from the fact of get over it and do it? (RUA/TE/TRIADIC/15:14-15)</i>
Supportive	<i>But, I was very impressed with the fact that you overcame it, and you just got onboard and just went with the flow. I think that's a really good indication of where you sit in terms of some of your teaching qualities, being adaptable, being flexible, and going with it. (TORU/TE/TRIADIC/2:5-8) So you're really clear about articulating what you believe and what you've seen and what you know... you're also open to new ideas... so in terms of your professional qualities, you're lovey, easy going, very friendly, you let the child be, you're there for them. (TAHI/TE/TRIADIC/38:20-39:5)</i>

The following quote reflects the importance of affirmation to the student in Case Wha.

There were a lot of things brought to my attention that, like good things that I possibly didn't even realise I was doing, and I think that's always nice to be told sometimes, because sometimes people forget to tell you when you're doing things great and letting you know, so it's always reassuring, especially when your lecturer comes and tells you. (WHA/ST/CASE/11:13-16)

In all four cases the assessment outcomes were positive, and the assessors were pleased with the quality of the students' practice. However student teachers appeared to grant more weight to any negative feedback, sometimes to a degree that was probably not intended by the teacher educator. For example, in Case Wha, the student teacher did not demonstrate sufficiently that she met the criteria for bi-cultural practice during the assessment visit. The teacher educator noted this during the triadic, and asked the associate teacher to follow through with this, and provide more feedback in her final report. While important, it was only a small component of an otherwise very positive assessment. However, the student teacher gave this a lot of weight.

...because then I think I got a bit upset but didn't show it, and so, then I was like, 'Oh [ST] you've just let yourself down – you've failed!' And, but yeah, but it was a stupid thing to think. So I was quite thankful that she's letting me, let my AT go through with me. (WHA/ST/CASE/12:12-15)

6.6. Assessment decision making and outcomes

In accordance with institutional requirements a final summative assessment decision was determined for each student teacher. The following section identifies the factors that were considered by the associate teacher and teacher educator in reaching the final decision.

Findings are drawn from the triadic assessment meeting, the final assessment reports and the

participant interviews. The discussion considers the way in which institutional criteria, personal/professional expectations, student self-assessment, and achievement of practicum goals informed the assessment outcome.

In all four cases, assessment was viewed as a collaborative process between the associate teacher and teacher educator, although the weighting of the contribution of each assessor varied across cases, as previously discussed. However, the final decision making responsibility was clearly seen by all participants to lie with the teacher educator as the institutional representative. The timing of this final decision varied across institutions, as was anticipated from the information reported in Chapter Four from key informants. For Cases Tahi and Toru, the student was informed of the assessment outcome at the time of the visit, while in Cases Rua and Wha the student received their grade when they had returned to the teaching programme. However, in the cases where the formal assessment outcome was given after the practicum, the students had inferred the likely assessment outcome from the context of the feedback given at the time of the visit. For example in Case Wha, the student teacher was aware at the end of the visit that there was one criteria still to be commented on by the associate teacher, but that all other criteria had been satisfactorily achieved, giving her reassurance as to the final outcome. The student teachers in these cases anticipated that if there were significant concerns that these would have been raised during the course of the visit and would not come as a surprise at a later point. The subsequent paperwork was seen as merely a formality.

Case Toru was unique in that at the end of the triadic meeting, the student teacher was asked to leave the room, and the teacher educator had a conversation with the associate teacher specifically regarding the grading of the practicum. He outlined the specific grading criteria of the institution and what each grade band meant, and then invited the associate teacher to

offer a grade. The associate teacher is somewhat surprised and comments that this is the first time she had been asked if the student had achieved or not achieved in such a way and that to be invited to do so validated her role as an associate teacher. The student was then invited back in, and told of the associate teacher's recommended grade, as well as the final grade awarded by the teacher educator. This process was not described in the key informant interview, and was not evidenced in any of the other triadic meetings, suggesting that it may reflect the individual approach of that teacher educator.

As described by Joughin (2009) and Haigh and Ell (2014), the final assessment decision making process in each case was the result of the professional judgement of the teacher educator, who considered multiple assessment measures. Assessment evidence included the observation and feedback of the associate teacher and the teacher educator, the student teacher's written task work and reflections, as well as the self-assessment offered by the student. These measures were referenced against both institutional assessment criteria and the professional and personal expectations of the teacher educator and associate teacher, supporting Hawe's (2002, p. 98) claim that "factors such as intuition, personal feelings, experience, knowledge of the subject and cumulative knowledge of the particular student" are key elements of professional judgment. Alignment between the elements of the assessment was important to the teacher educators. The teacher educator in Case Wha comments that, *"I'm also looking for an alignment between what I think I'm seeing and what she says she is doing"* (WHA/TE/CASE/5:12-13), reflecting that part of the assessment role was to seek consistency between expressed and observed practice, as well as feedback from different sources.

In each of the cases, the student teachers were considered to be doing well and successfully meeting the expectations for the stage of study. The teacher educators and associate teachers

expressed no concerns at all about these students moving into the profession. Such confidence made the assessment process much more straightforward, and decision making generally clear cut.

6.6.1. Use of criteria

For the teacher educator in Case Wha, the criteria were to the forefront throughout the elements of the visit. She had the institutional assessment form in front of her throughout the visit, and added information to each criteria as she spoke to the student teacher, the associate teacher and conducted her observation. In describing her assessment processes, this teacher educator commented that she kept the criteria in her mind all the way through the visit, and was constantly looking for evidence of each criteria. She had memorised the criteria, and was able to make connections between the criteria and observed practice. In the other three cases, the teacher educator did not foreground the criteria as explicitly; they were referred to in Case Toru, but not mentioned at all during the triadic meeting in Cases Tahi and Rua.

Student teachers made little reference to the institutional criteria either in the triadic meeting, or the subsequent interviews. They were aware of the criteria, and believed that the criteria played an important part in the final written report of the associate teacher and teacher educator, but saw the personal expectations of their assessors as more significant. Associate teachers provided feedback in relation to criteria within the written documentation that they sent to the institution, but there were limited references to formal criteria in their contribution to the triadic meeting, or in the way associate teachers described their assessment practices. For these participants, it appeared that institutional criteria were considered, but secondary to other elements of the assessment process. The associate teacher in Case Toru raised her concern that at times she had difficulty in interpreting the assessment criteria provided and considered them to be overly academic, similar to the reports of associate teachers in Beck

and Kosnik's (2000) study. She suggested that examples that help associate teachers and student teachers to better understand what each criteria might look like in practice might be valuable. However, other teacher educators and associate teachers indicated that they approached the institutional assessment criteria with a degree of flexibility, which thereby allowed them to respond to the individual characteristics of the student teacher and the context of the practicum setting. There was indication from the assessors that decision making becomes much more challenging when the student is considered 'borderline', and that criteria play a much more significant role in such situations, as reflected in the following comment: *"They're probably more of a guide when things aren't going right"* (TORU/AT/CASE/12-20).

6.6.2. Professional/personal expectations

While institutional criteria play a demonstrable and articulated role in assessment, it appears that the individual expectations of the assessors are equally, if not more significant, in determining assessment decision making (Ortlipp, 2009), but much less transparent (Haigh & Ell, 2014). The parallel role of established criteria and personal/professional expectations was captured by the associate teacher in Case Rua. When asked what would inform her assessment decision making she responded: *"I guess from my observations of him working with children and the staff, and I guess my knowledge of what a teacher, what I expect a teacher should be"* (RUA/AT/CASE/3:20-21). These expectations guide the way in which assessors exercise their professional judgement, as described by Joughin (2009) and Ortlipp (2009). The associate teachers and teacher educators in these cases were experienced in their roles, and brought their professional knowledge and experience to the assessment process.

When asked to describe the factors considered in decision-making, it became apparent that each assessor carried an internal measure of what they considered to be a 'good teacher', and

their own checklist of qualities that they looked for in the student teacher. Such qualities were not necessarily explicitly articulated to student teachers – they represented the personally-held system of beliefs, values and principles that formed the assessor’s implicit understanding of teaching (Graves, 2010; Spodek & Saracho, 2003). The teacher educator from Case Toru expressed his internal measure in the following ways:

As a lecturer I can bring all the academic stuff, look for and assess the academic stuff, but my ultimate evaluation is usually guided by intuition, the intuition that they know how to use that, all that academia stuff, intuition that they are an authentic practitioner and they have the passion and commitment and the rights for the children at the forefront, and intuition that they are a good person, and they do deserve to be with our children. That’s probably an interesting statement, deserving to be with our children... because it carries my own intuition, that we don’t automatically have rights as an adult to work with children, but we must prove it. So to some extent that might subconsciously be there in my evaluation process – have you earned the right and the privilege. (TORU/TE/CASE/9:17-10:4)

The teacher educators and associate teachers in each case expressed a wide range of both professional and personal qualities that they deemed to be important, as reported in Table 6.3. This list of qualities was drawn from feedback given in the triadic meeting, as well as from the interviews with associate teachers and teacher educators. This list is not exhaustive, but represents a range of typical responses across the four cases.

Table 6.3*Desired student teacher qualities as identified by associate teachers and teacher educators*

Student teacher qualities	Examples provided by associate teachers and teacher educators
<i>Personal qualities</i>	Passionate, open, relaxed, unassuming, shows initiative, prepared, loves children, flexible, teachable, gracious, willing to learn, takes advice, easy going, friendly, warm, kind, respectful, trustworthy, honest.
<i>Professional qualities</i>	Takes responsibility, ensures safety, can work in every area of the centre, practical curriculum skills, open to new ideas, use of Te Reo Māori, supports centre routines, reflective, able to connect theory and practice.
<i>Relational qualities</i>	Develops positive connections with children and families, talks with colleagues, works as part of the team, respects children's space, collaborative.
<i>Knowledge of teaching and learning</i>	Knowledge of Te Whāriki, extends children's thinking, asks appropriate questions to support learning, bi-cultural practice, able to take mat-times, supportive of individual children, honours children and their contribution, appropriate use of language.

Although associate teachers and teacher educators were able to articulate a range of qualities that they wished to see evident in the student teacher, a sentinel question that underpinned the assessment decision became apparent – ‘Would I want this person teaching children?’ Some of the participants personalised this further, to their own children or grandchildren, as captured in the following comment from the teacher educator in Case Wha:

So, I guess I have an internal measurement, judgement, whatever it is you want to call it... Yeah, about would I leave my children with this teacher?... Would I leave my grandchildren with this teacher? And I think those are things that are really, really, important, because they're the things that come from the belly. They're our basic instincts about whether we trust this person... so, and sometimes we might have lots of questions about a person, and we have to make a final judgement – that's part of our role as an assessor. (WHA/TE/CASE/19:8-19)

Associate teachers also framed this question in terms of whether they would be happy to teach alongside the student teacher: *"Yeah, just kind of get a feeling, yeah really if you want them working with you and the team"* (WHA/AT/CASE/15:23-24). Criteria and indicators were seen as helpful in explaining the rationale for their choice, especially if there are concerns about the student's competence, but the question 'would I want this person teaching children' remained central.

As all of the student teachers were close to completion, the teacher educators and associate teachers articulated that there were higher expectations of the student teachers' practice and their 'readiness to teach'. The students' practices were weighed against the assessors' conception of what it means to be a teacher, in evaluating if the student teacher is ready to move into a full teaching role. The associate teacher in Case Rua shared an example where the children were taken out of the centre to a local park, and she asked the student teacher to lead the excursion. She chose to take an observatory role, watching to see how the student managed the situation, including when a child ran away. She explained to the teacher educator that she had chosen to do this because it was a last practicum and she wanted to be sure that he was ready: *"giving him things to challenge him... for him to step out of his comfort zone, especially this prac being the last one. I really want him to leave here feeling like he's a teacher and he's ready to go into a job, because really he should be [laughs] you know"* (RUA/AT/CASE/2:16-21). This same belief was evidenced by the teacher educator in Case Rua, who stated that: *"My expectation was I'm going to turn up and I'm going to see a teacher, because that is how you pass this practicum. You show actually, 'Prac six is where I'm teaching because I'm ready to go out'"* (RUA/TE/CASE/2:15-17).

6.6.3. Student self-assessment

Fostering self-assessment is seen to enhance student teachers' engagement in, and ownership of monitoring their learning in the practicum experience (Keesing-Styles, 2003; Lew, Alwis & Schmidt, 2009), as well as eliciting assessment data that is meaningful and contextually grounded (Iverson, Lewis & Talbit, 2008). Within the assessment processes and documentation for each case, there was little evidence of a formal self-assessment tool for student teachers. In the interviews, each participant was asked to indicate if student self-assessment had been a factor in assessment decision-making. Findings suggest that teacher educators, associate teachers and student teachers felt that self-assessment was captured in the requirement for student reflection during the practicum. Student teachers were encouraged to share their reflections, both verbal and written, and these were considered to some measure by both the associate teacher and teacher educator in reaching the final assessment decision. However, when used in such a manner, the reflections serve more to provide evidence to the teacher educator, than for the student to actually monitor or review their practice against criteria or individual goals. At no point in any of the cases was the student teacher invited to offer an assessment grade for themselves, and in only one case (Wha) was the student given opportunity to comment on how they would assess their practice against assessment outcomes. In this case, there was space in the assessment report for the student to write a reflection beside each of the key assessment areas. The teacher educator recommended that the student complete these sections, but they were noted to be voluntary, not a requirement. The findings suggest that there is little training or support for student teachers to participate in self-assessment, which would be needed to support meaningful engagement leading to ownership and self-awareness (Norsworthy, 2008).

6.6.4. Achievement of personal goals

In Phase One, the institutional informants indicated that student teachers were required to set individual goals for each practicum and that achievement of goals would be one of the criteria considered in the final assessment decision. However, in the triadic meetings there was minimal reference to goal setting or goal achievement, which appeared to play a limited role in assessment decision making. In the triadic meetings students were not asked to articulate their goals, or to describe progress that they had made in these areas. The data collection for this phase did not include reviewing the written folder/task work that student teachers were required to submit, so it is possible that goal achievement received more attention in this component.

6.7. Authentic assessment

So, when I'm thinking about assessment for students, I'm actually going in there to try and put their minds at ease and get them relaxed, because I think that's really important for them to be able to show who they really are as teachers. (WHA/TE/ CASE/4:20-23)

The responses from participants that spoke to the theme of authentic assessment were primarily grounded in the quality of the triadic relationships. Participants expressed a belief that if relationships were positive, open and honest, then the student would be 'known' in a meaningful, authentic way, which would in turn support assessment feedback that was relevant, supportive and valid. In the interviews, each participant was asked if they believed that the assessment had provided an authentic assessment of the student teacher. Across all four cases, there was general agreement that the assessments were authentic, but with caveats. In particular the short duration of time that the teacher educator spends with the student teacher was acknowledged by each participant group. Time constraints were seen as a limiting factor, with several participants noting that the visit only allowed the teacher educator

to capture a 'snapshot' of the student's overall practice. To mitigate this, the complimentary role of the associate teacher was seen as most significant, as was a pre-existing relationship between the student teacher and teacher educator. The student in Case Toru commented that: *"Because [the TE's] only getting such a small snippet, that I mean, I could really fake it and he wouldn't know... But my associate is going to bring in that kind of genuine factor, you know, whether it's authentic..."* (TORU/ST/CASE/2:8-10). The value of having the teacher educator visit more than once, and for longer periods of time, was raised by students, associates and teacher educators themselves, suggesting that such strategies would support a better understanding of the student and allow the student to show progress over time; similar to findings reported by Kane (2005).

Positive relationships were seen by participants to provide a context for honest professional discussions that supported authentic assessment (Doxey, 1996; Grey, 2011). In choosing to share honest reflection, particularly if doing so suggests an area of weakness in their practice, the student teacher took a risk in making themselves vulnerable (Cattley, 1997). An example was illustrated in Case Wha, when the student teacher discussed her initial resistance to bi-cultural practice and the growth she had made in this area. The student teacher acknowledged the risk she felt, in openly asking the teacher educator if she can be honest in her response:

TE: *Where does that put, in terms of your bi-culturalness and who you are as a bi-cultural teacher ... and how do you feel about the Treaty, tell me what you thought?*

ST: *Oh my gosh, OK. To be bluntly honest, can I be really honest?*

TE: *Yeah, yeah sure.*

ST: *I was so not into the Treaty thing in my first year...* (WHA/TRIADIC/6:5-10)

This opening led to an extensive dialogue between the teacher educator and student in relation to her growth in bi-cultural practice. The teacher educator affirmed the student's professional growth and provided her with specific knowledge to extend her practices further. Had the student not felt safe to share her reflection, the teacher educator would not have had such an authentic assessment of the student teacher. The associate teacher also made specific reference to how honest the student had been: *"She's been really honest about her strengths and weaknesses really"* (WHA/AT/CASE/18:13), and how this had enabled the associate teacher and teacher educator to provide appropriate support and guidance.

The teacher educator in Case Rua was the only participant to suggest that the process may not have given him an authentic picture of the student teacher. His explanation reflects the need for time, relationship and multiple viewpoints in order to enhance authentic assessment, and is all the more confronting due to the fact that this is only case where the student teacher is visited on more than one occasion during the practicum:

Researcher: Do you feel that your three visits to [the ST] and what you've gathered about him give you an authentic picture of him as a future teacher?

TE: *I think this practicum, practicum six, where they have three visits, on its own I would say no, because I get to see him for six hours in an environment. But the history I have of having taught him, and had the previous experiences of seeing his growth and understanding, I would say if you add all that in, so the overall picture, so taking in a three year picture I would say yes.*

Researcher: But not just the process itself?

TE: *No, not just the process itself. And I think, I don't know, maybe we'll discover when we're externally moderated that we'll get some feedback on that, but my thinking is that just three visits on their own probably hasn't honoured the student in itself. Adding in the associate teacher's report strengthens that, and probably*

adding that in, and I would say might just about give you a, yeah, this is what should be done, sort of thing. But, good luck finding a solution to that. (RUA/TE/CASE/9:21-10:10)

While student teachers and associate teachers reflect some concern in relation to the length of time of the visit and how much the teacher educator can come to know the student within this time frame, teacher educators themselves (with the exception of Rua) indicate less concern. The teacher educators acknowledged the limitations of the visit and their role, but saw the visit as only one part of the bigger assessment picture, understanding that decision making would be the result of many elements. The concerns of the student teachers and associate teachers may be mitigated if the way in which assessment decisions were reached was more fully articulated, at an institutional and individual case level, as argued by Haigh and Ell (2014).

While the comments of participants overall indicate that they believe the assessment in these cases to be authentic, there is still indication from the student teachers that they felt the need to deliver a performance during the assessment visit, in response to their expectations of what the teacher educator would be looking for. The student from Rua specifically referred to the notion of being a 'performing seal' and identified that he had made choices to please the assessor, as indicated in the following comment: *"Well, I'm not really out there to impress, but I want to keep the TE happy. So I do the mat-times anyway"* (RUA/ST/CASE/15:10-11). The student from Toru talked about her dilemma in relation to whether to plan a specific activity for the teacher educator to observe. She chose to set up an art activity as she felt this was expected but reflected in the post assessment interview that: *"I don't like to have a set plan, because it's so, I don't know, it's too fake for me. I didn't, to be honest, I didn't want to do even that art activity"* (TORU/ST/CASE/3:3-4). These comments suggest that student teachers feel the need to portray themselves in a particular way according to the context and expectations

of the assessor, which may prohibit an authentic picture of the student as a future teacher (Goodnough, et al., 2009; Harwell & Moore, 2010).

The suggestion that assessment is more authentic when conducted by a teacher educator with a pre-existing relationship with the student teacher was initially raised at an institutional level in Phase One, and echoes of this perspective appear in these cases. The student teacher in Case Tahi commented that she was more relaxed because she knew the teacher educator prior to the visit, and felt she was a person that she was able to talk easily with. The teacher educator in Case Toru was also a strong advocate for pre-existing relationships, stating:

To go in cold case and be able to evaluate, I think that would be a little bit unfair, both on the person doing the evaluation and on the student, simply because I am very conscious how different factors, different settings, different personalities and people can all impact on that experience. And do, all it would take if we only visited them once, it would take one incident or one factor to throw everything out of balance. Whereas, if we got a sense of them beforehand and visited them more, then we could make a more informed decision in the evaluation process. (TORU/TE/CASE/3:6-12)

However, opinion is mixed as to whether this strategy would be beneficial in all cases, as there is the potential for the relationship between the student teacher and teacher educator to be problematic, which could penalise the student if this was the only assessment perspective gathered.

6.8. Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of four case studies that address the research objectives of the study through describing the way in which assessment was conducted in each

of the four institutions, illuminated the assessment experiences of student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators, and reflected on the participants' understanding of authentic assessment. The case studies reveal the individuality of each practicum in the way in which assessment is enacted and experienced. Although each of these assessments was conducted within institutional guidelines, the assessment act was shaped by the functioning of the student teacher/associate teacher dyad, and then the student teacher/associate teacher/teacher educator triad at the time of the assessment visit. Even while there were many similar characteristics, each case presented its own unique assessment story. The findings support an understanding of assessment decision making as a complex, subjective act that is determined through consideration of multiple evidence points, evaluated against both institutional criteria and the personal and professional expectations of the assessors. The cases affirm the notion that practicum assessment is a social act (Haigh & Ell, 2014) that is influenced by the interpersonal relationships of the key participants. Findings suggest that the participants are strategic in what they say (and don't say) in order to support positive and functioning relationships. Hierarchical power relationships are still in evidence, even when assessors seek to work more collaboratively, due the awareness of summative assessment requirements. Authentic assessment is positioned as an outcome of relationships between participants, in which there can be open and honest communication, and the student is able to be 'known' in genuine ways. The following chapter provides a synthesis of the three phases of results, returning to the key research objectives to illuminate how practicum was assessed across a sample of initial teacher education institutions, the beliefs, perceptions and experience of the key stakeholders and the factors which supported authentic assessment of student teacher practice. Discussion addresses the way in which the findings of the present study affirm or challenge the existing literature in the field, and illuminates current practices and future challenges.

Chapter Seven - The Practice and Experience of Assessment in Early Childhood Initial Teacher Education

7.1. Introduction

The present study was guided by the research question: *“How is the assessment of practicum enacted and experienced by key stakeholders in early childhood initial teacher education?”* and framed by three key research objectives:

- To critically analyse how a representative sample of New Zealand initial teacher education institutions assess the early childhood practicum;
- To critically examine the beliefs, perceptions and experiences of the key stakeholders in practicum assessment, and;
- To identify the factors that support authentic assessment of student teachers’ practice during practicum.

In this chapter, discussion will synthesise the results across the three phases of the study in order to address the research question and objectives, analysing the findings in light of the key extant literature and research related to the assessment of practicum. This chapter will also highlight the alignment between the institutional reports (Phase One), the individual reports of participants (Phase Two) and the practices evident in the case studies (Phase Three), to determine if findings were congruent across all phases. The key themes evident within each phase are revisited. The following chapter is structured in three sections, addressing in turn each of the research objectives identified above.

7.2. How the early childhood practicum is assessed in New Zealand

The first research objective was *‘to critically analyse how a representative sample of New Zealand initial teacher education institutions assess the early childhood practicum’*. The intent was to illuminate and make current practicum assessment policy and practice more

transparent. The results identified many similarities in approach to practicum assessment across the four institutions. Each institution developed the parameters for practicum within the regulatory framework provided by the New Zealand Teachers Council for the accreditation of ITE programmes, which as Kane (2005) noted, is likely to explain many of the similarities evident. These regulations determined the parameters for length, location and number of practica required, specified that students be supported by a qualified and registered associate teacher within the early childhood setting, and visited by a suitable representative of the teacher education institution (NZTC, 2010). Within this regulatory framework, each institution adopted what Rodgers and Keil (2007) refer to as the traditional student supervision triad of student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator, who each contribute to the assessment in different ways. The similarity in findings across the four institutions affirms the notion that practicum is a site of practice that is characterised by distinctive participation structures, with many shared values, practices and expectations (Rogoff, 2014).

Each institution adopted a form of 'partnership model' (Zeichner, 2010) in which the institution and the education setting share responsibility for supporting and assessing the student teacher. Close relationships between the institution and the early childhood practicum settings were described as critical by the key informants in Phase One, a belief reiterated by teacher educators and associate teachers through the other phases of the study. However, the traditional divide between the institution as the site of theoretical knowledge and the education setting as the site of practice knowledge (Zeichner, 2010) appears evident in the way roles and responsibilities of the participants in this study were apportioned (Allen, 2011). Summative assessment and grading of the student were exclusively positioned by all participant groups as the responsibility of the teacher educator and institution, with the assessment role of the associate teacher being primarily formative in orientation, paralleling Smith's (2007) findings. Findings did not indicate that associate teachers were given material

to support their knowledge and understanding of the content or theory within the ITE programme, a concern also reported by Jones, Reid and Bevins (1997), further establishing a theory/practice divide between the settings.

Despite the long history of practicum within teacher education, and the acceptance of practicum as a site of assessment of student teacher competence, there are few studies that provide explicit detail of the assessment methods and practices adopted. The findings of this study revealed close parallels to Turnbull's (1999) description of the way in which the assessment of practicum was conducted in the early childhood programme at the Auckland College of Education, and identified that the assessment process included the following elements (p. 30-31):

- Pre-briefing of all triad members.
- On-going support and feedback from the associate teacher during the practicum, including written feedback.
- An early supervisory visit and later summative assessment visit that included observation of the student and feedback.
- A triadic meeting of student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator that included an oral reflective process in which each triad member reflected on the way in which the student had met the learning outcomes or areas for further development. The teacher educator facilitated the discussion to reach consensus. Discussion was to relate to criteria and be supported by evidence.
- Additional written work, including a written self-assessment from the student, and an associate teacher report are used to form the basis of the teacher educator's written report.

Each these elements were evident in the data provided by the institutional key informants, and evidenced in practice in the way in which the case studies were enacted, albeit with some small institutional variations. As defined by Haigh, Ell and Mackisack (2013), the four key contributors to assessment judgements were observation, discussion, documentation and other voices.

It is interesting to note the similarities in process with fifteen years between Turnbull's description and the present study, suggesting that such practices reflect a dominant discourse about practicum assessment in New Zealand ITE and raise the possibility of taken for granted practices that warrant further scrutiny. Such practices include the use of assessment visits from institutional representatives, and the use of the triadic meeting as the forum for both collecting and disseminating assessment information to the student teacher. Little justification was offered as a rationale for the continuing role of these practices, with some comments indicating that practices may be inherited – 'the way it has always been done'. The practices have become part of a cultural form (Rogoff, 2003) that shapes the expected way in which the assessment of practicum takes place. These practices are perpetuated and reinforced in accreditation processes, as well as induction and training for teacher educators, student teachers and associate teachers. Rogoff (2003) argues that habitual relations between people become cultural habits, which then become institutionalised rules and ways of being, established as historical, taken for granted practice that may not well be well understood by the current participants.

Across all three phases, the findings of the study affirm Tillema, Smith and Lesham's (2011, p. 140) assertion that the stakeholders of the practicum "seem to have the most confidence in a mentor-guided, judgement oriented approach to assessment". Assessment practices, as both described and observed, relied extensively on the professional judgements of both associate

teacher and teacher educator, albeit enacted within the context of supportive, professional growth oriented relationships (Ortlipp, 2009). However, as Grudnoff (2011) points out, a reliance on professional judgement has persistent issues related to the shared understanding of assessment guidelines and transparency around the grounds that assessors use in their judgements (Grudnoff, 2011). Such issues were clearly evident in these data too; acknowledged by the key informants, as well as by each participant group in the survey. Ensuring fair and consistent assessment was seen as problematic, in the interplay between individual and institutional expectations and understandings. The case studies made visible that assessors had their own reference points for making assessment judgments that may or may not have reflected the assessment criteria presented by the institution, and that student teachers and associate teachers at times found it difficult to understand the judgements made.

When asked to describe the philosophical underpinnings for the way in which practicum was assessed in each institution, key informants in Phase One reported that the conceptual framework of their programme provided the overarching beliefs and principles that guided the established practices. Kane (2005) examined the available conceptual frameworks of the twenty-seven New Zealand providers of initial teacher education. She noted that most conceptual frameworks were focused on articulating the following: teaching and learning within the sector; how best one learns to become a teacher; and the contexts for which and within which teachers are prepared (p. xiv). There was often limited attention to deeper principles or theoretical rationale for institutional practice and policy. The following section discusses some key findings, however it is acknowledged that the study did not, as hoped, yield a full articulation of why assessment of practicum is enacted in specific ways within each institution. It may be that more scope could have been given to the rationale for assessment practices in the data collection, or may further reflect that many practices are historical or

entrenched in institutional practice, requiring access to other key informants who could articulate further the reasons for specific assessment practices.

7.2.1. Purpose of assessment

Participants across each phase of the study consistently agreed that assessment of practicum was to serve both formative and summative purposes. Participants indicated that summative and formative assessment purposes are viewed as different components within an holistic assessment picture. The institutional key informants, teacher educators and associate teachers all identified formative assessment as being the primary focus during practicum, for the purpose of fostering the professional growth of the student teacher, as consistent with the findings of Tillema, Smith and Lesham (2011). However, summative assessment was cited as necessary in relation to the quality assurance of the ITE programme, and the need to ensure the suitability and readiness of graduates to enter the teaching profession, consistent with other studies (Rorrison, 2010). In contrast to the findings of Tillema, Smith and Lesham (2011) and Joughin (2009), associate teachers and teacher educators did not appear to see as significant a tension between the formative and summative purposes of assessment, but rather that the dual purposes of assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning could be met successfully within the practicum.

The findings suggest that the associate teacher role in assessment is primarily formative, with responsibility for final summative decision making reserved for the teacher educator and institution, which supports the findings of both Kane (2005), and Tillema, Smith and Lesham (2011). The typical practice reported in Phase One, and reflected in each case study, was for the associate teacher to observe the practice of the student teacher throughout the duration of the practicum, providing on-going feedback to the student teacher to support professional growth. The associate teacher then shared their observation and feedback with the teacher

educator at the time of the final assessment meeting, which was used by the teacher educator as one of several evidence points in reaching the final assessment decision. The assessment visit and triadic meeting between student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator were typically positioned as the summative assessment point. This assessment visit was the point of evidence gathering, if not final decision-making, in determining the progress of the student within the qualification, or readiness to enter the teaching profession.

However, the demarcation between formative and summative assessment is not absolute, as shown in the case studies where the teacher educators used their observations during the visit to provide formative feedback to the student about the qualities of their teaching practices, affirming areas of strength and identifying areas where further development was needed. Darling-Hammond and Synder (2000) propose that formative feedback should be used as a tool within multiple opportunities for the student to develop competence. Given that the assessment visit typically occurs towards the end of the practicum, it is questionable if formative assessment and feedback given at this point of the practicum allows the student teacher the opportunity to take the feedback and apply it, demonstrating the desired change and growth in practice. The implication is therefore that student teachers are expected to take this feedback and use it to guide future practice, whether it be subsequent practica or in a teaching position post-graduation. However, the study revealed little evidence of the way in which students are supported or guided to take formative feedback from one practicum into future practice, or explicit support for making connections to feedback from previous experiences.

Key informants, teacher educators and associate teachers report that greater emphasis is placed on formative assessment purposes in the first two years of the student teachers programme, with summative purposes taking on greater significance in the final year of the

study as the student approaches graduation and entry to the profession. It was suggested by key informants and teacher educators that greater lenience would be shown in the earlier stages of the study, in the hope that with time and opportunity the student will demonstrate the desired growth in practice. However, it appears that such practices cause some ethical tension, as professional growth of the student is not assured, resulting in student teachers who proceed a significant way into the programme only to fail.

7.2.2. Standards and criteria

Each institution adopted a standards-based approach to assessment (Cochran-Smith, 2001; Sadler, 2005), in response to NZTC accreditation requirements (NZTC, 2010), and the Graduating Teacher Standards (NZTC, 2007). In the introduction to the Standards it stipulates that all institutions must provide evidence as to how the ITE programme prepares graduates to meet the standards, and that no student can graduate from the programme without having demonstrated the required competencies in practicum situations. The Graduating Teacher Standards thereby provided a general framework within which practicum assessment was enacted in each institution, and may be seen as a culturally mediated tool that expresses shared values relating to what is considered to be an effective teacher (Rogoff, 2003).

Each institution also articulated learning outcomes and criteria specific to the practicum. Criteria are informed by current discourse, including the Graduating Teacher Standards (NZTC, 2007), and key documents such as *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996). Criteria are also identified and approved in a process of sector consultation and key stakeholder feedback. Key informants in Phase One explained the importance of documented criteria in providing participants with a clear understanding of the institutional expectations of achievement, as well as fostering shared understanding between the triad members (Brown, 2008). Criteria were seen by both student teachers and associate teachers

as important in identifying the expectations of students at each stage of their study. However, Brown (2008, p. 90) further argues that to reach shared understanding and consensus between the practicum participants “requires interrogation of the perspectives of each”. The findings of the study indicate that there was limited attention to determining shared expectations within the assessment act, resulting in assessment outcomes that were informed more strongly by the professional and personal judgements of the assessors than the institutional criteria. In particular, associate teachers acknowledged uncertainty in operationalising criteria, and knowing whether their own understanding of criteria was appropriate. Given that the institutionally determined criteria serves as a culturally mediated assessment tool, it is problematic that the key participants may not have a mutually shared understanding of and commitment to the expectations of success for practicum. There were limited examples in the case studies where either the teacher educator or associate teacher specifically outlined what they were looking for in relation to criteria, and little reference to criteria in the triadic assessment meeting. These findings support the position of Haigh, Ell and Mackisack (2013) who claim that criteria are often not clearly communicated or explained to the triad participants, leading to concerns about the comparability, and thereby reliability, of practicum assessments across education settings. Of note, was that both associate teachers and teacher educators reported that criteria play a more prominent role in assessment when there are concerns about the student, as they enable the assessors to pinpoint specific practices that need attention, a finding also reported by Brown (2008).

Findings across the three phases suggest support Allen’s (2011) contention that institutions need to strengthen the way in which they communicate assessment criteria and provide guidance on its role in the assessment process. When assessment criteria are not understood or accepted, then assessors may place even greater reliance on their own expectations and professional judgement, which may or may not align with institutional criteria. Pajares (1992)

argues that teachers' beliefs are complex and messy, shaped extensively by their own educational and cultural experiences. While assessing student teachers it appears that both associate teachers and teacher educators may revert back to these fundamental beliefs in guiding their 'intuition' and 'gut feeling' about a student, giving such beliefs primacy in decision making. Furthermore, although assessment criteria are established with attention to stakeholder and sector feedback, it is likely that the participants in a given practicum played no part in the negotiation of expected criteria, potentially limiting their understanding of and commitment to the criteria as provided. Iverson et al. (2008) and Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000) argue that criteria that are co-created with participants will elicit more authentic assessment, although this is arguably difficult to achieve in a programme with the dual challenges of multiple practicum sites (and participants), and external accreditation requirements.

The findings of this study suggest that in practice, institutional guidelines and assessment criteria play a secondary role to the professional/personal judgements made by individual assessors. This result strongly mirrors those of Hawe (2002), who found that assessment was frequently expressed as a personal/professional judgement, more often related to the student as a person, than to the expressed outcomes or performance standards. Findings suggest that both associate teachers and teacher educators enter the practicum situation with a pre-existing set of expectations that sit alongside those expressed by the institution (Ortlipp, 2009). Both associate teachers and teacher educators have an internal image of a 'good student teacher' and the actions of the student are both consciously and unconsciously measured against this image. A number of references were made across the study to the questions such as 'would I want this student to teach my child/grandchild?' or 'would I want to employ/teach with this student teacher?', a question also raised in Rorrison's (2010) research. Such questions move assessment of practicum from the professional to the personal realm.

This position was justified by participants as an expressed desire to serve as gatekeeper to the profession and to protect vulnerable children, which has also been found in other studies, such as Smith (2007).

7.2.3. Final assessment decision making

As described in the preceding chapters, the final assessment outcome for a student teacher on practicum is determined by the teacher educator, who utilises their professional judgement to synthesise multiple evidence points including associate teacher observation and feedback, observed student teacher practice at the time of the visit, feedback from the student teacher, achievement of goals and written documentation, consistent with the practices reported by authors such as Haigh, Ell, and Mackisack (2013) and Smith (2007). The evidence from these sources is evaluated by the teacher educator against institutional criteria and professional and personal expectations. This is a high trust model of assessment: while the assessment is conducted within the guidelines and parameters of the institution, the assessment is a subjective act that relies heavily on the expectations and judgement of the teacher educator. Results confirm the contention that “hierarchical decision making in student teaching is a particularly constant characteristic” (Veal & Rikard, 1998, p. 108). In this study institutional policy positioned the teacher educator as having the final decision making responsibility and this was evident in each of the case studies. Smith (2007) contends that teacher educators may be reluctant to devolve their decision making responsibilities to associate teachers, which establishes a sense of inequality between participants. However, the findings of this study suggest that associate teachers do not necessarily desire the responsibility of final decision making and are happy with the role distribution as it stands, as Beck and Kosnik (2000) also reported.

The findings support a view of assessment decision making as both an individual and collaborative act, dependent upon the complexity of the case and the culture of the institution. In assessments where the evidence is positive and participants are in agreement about the achievement of the student teacher, the teacher educator is likely to make an autonomous decision. However, when there is uncertainty or disagreement, teacher educators typically seek the support of colleagues and/or leaders within the initial teacher education programme to guide the final assessment outcome. Difficult decisions concerning a student teacher's practice or possible failure are made collaboratively, as a means of moderation and confirmation of the most appropriate decision. A number of participants indicated that sharing assessment concerns between each other was a valued practice within the institutional culture, and provided support and reassurance. The way in which teacher educators seek the support of colleagues and the subsequent influence on assessment practices is not explored in the literature, but would appear to be important to teacher educators and worthy of further research.

Observation of a student teacher's practice was identified by teacher educators and associate teachers as a primary assessment tool, confirming the findings of other New Zealand studies such as Haigh, Ell and Mackisack (2010), Smith (2007) and Turnbull (1999). However, a comprehensive understanding of the way in which teacher educators and associate teachers conduct their observations and draw inferences in relation to the student teacher's practice was not captured. Results suggest that the assessors have an individual approach to observation, attending to different areas and reporting the observations in different ways, both formal and informal. Professional judgment, in the context of community cultural values of expected practices (Rogoff, 2003), played a critical role in the way in which the observation was analysed and utilised in feedback to the student in each case. In only one case in Phase Three was the observation of the teacher educator used in a collaborative way to foster

professional dialogue between the student and the teacher educator. In this case, the teacher educator sought clarification and justification from the student teacher for the teaching practices observed. In the other cases there was little opportunity for critique or challenge to the teacher educator's observation. This may be particularly problematic when the participants do not share the same values, expectations or practices against which the observations are analysed.

The need for assessment practices and decision making to be flexible and responsive to the individual student is implicated in the findings. While there are similar patterns evident in the assessment approaches of the institutions and individual assessors, the findings support Smith's (2007) claim that there is no one right way to assess practicum, and that what is appropriate in one context may not be appropriate in another. Participants identified the need for assessment practices to respond to the early childhood context, the nature of the triadic relationships, the needs of the student teacher, and the stage of study that the student is at. Both assessors need to make decisions throughout the practicum and the triadic assessment visit, as to what approach is best given the specific context. These findings affirm the need for assessment to take into consideration both the institutional and relational factors within the practicum, supporting Rogoff's argument that development is not an individual act. However, such a responsive and flexible approach relies on skilful assessors who can attend to multiple variables and the complexities of assessment between an institutional and the practicum placement setting.

This study indicates there are potential challenges to the validity and reliability of the assessment, due to a lack of shared understanding of the assessment criteria, limited articulation of expectations, and the indication that the personal expectations and judgements of assessors play such a significant role in assessment decision-making. However, it is

important to note that such concerns are acknowledged by the institutional informants and teacher educators, and strategies to address these concerns implemented. Turnbull (1999) suggests that the validity of the triadic approach is established in the provision of learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are shared by participants and supported through the consideration of multiple evidence points within the practicum, a finding supported by the recent work of Haigh, Ell and Mackisack (2013). The teacher educators in the current study reported similar practices, with the reliability and trustworthiness of assessment supported by the alignment of feedback from each participant and the evidence presented in the student's written work.

Disagreement over the final assessment decision was a concern at both an institutional and individual level. The task of the teacher educator is to seek consensus during the triadic meeting, but is not always possible and participants indicated that disagreement does occur, confirming earlier findings such as Smith (2010) and Turnbull (1999). Across all three phases of the study, participants reported disagreement to be an uncomfortable place and one they feared could lead to a breakdown in the triadic relationship, an outcome that they wished to avoid given the primacy given to positive interpersonal connections. At times, disagreement caused the participants of the triadic to take sides, positioning two of the participants against the other. Disagreement could also lead the teacher educator or associate teacher to become protective of the student teacher, if they felt the assessment was in some way unjust or inaccurate. However, at other times it appeared that disagreement caused one or more of the participants to defer their perspective to whomever was seen as the more powerful member of the triad, typically the person with responsibility for the summative decision. Ortlipp (2009) argues that at points of disagreement, assessors may choose to remain silent in order to maintain the relationships in the triadic, or to minimise potential conflict. In Ortlipp's (2009) study, the focus was on the silence of the teacher educator, as the model of teacher education

placed the associate teacher with greater summative decision making power. Similar findings were evident in these data, with associate teachers, teacher educators and student teachers all reporting that there were times in which they chose to remain silent in order to preserve the triadic relationship, or because they felt that their contribution was not valued. However, the case data would suggest that student teachers and associate teachers were more likely to be silenced than the teacher educator, perhaps reflecting the hierarchical roles evident. Beliefs regarding the appropriateness of challenging those in positions of authority are culturally determined (Rogoff, 2003) and must be understood within the cultural contexts of the individual participants, the early childhood setting and the institutions, which may or may not align.

In attending to issues of fairness, consistency, reliability and validity, moderation processes related to practicum assessment require scrutiny. Little has been written about the way in which assessment outcomes might be moderated, either formally or informally, or how disagreement may be resolved. Adie, Lloyd and Beutal (2013, p. 969), in discussing moderation practices in New Zealand and Australia tertiary education claim that:

There appears, at present, to be liminal understanding of moderation as an integral part of teaching and learning, and differentiated understanding as to why or how moderation should occur and how circumstances may affect the type of practice adopted. This may lead to the emergence of idiosyncratic or sporadic processes between and within tertiary institutions.

Results suggest that the institutions adopted a predominantly informal approach to moderation that relies extensively on collegial discussion between the team members in the early childhood ITE programme. The need for pre-moderation, in which teacher educators discuss their shared understanding of assessment criteria and expected competence (Adie,

Lloyd & Beutal, 2013) was seen by key informants and teacher educators as providing a critical foundation for valid and reliable assessment, in order to ensure a shared understanding of the repertoire of practices expected at different points of the student teacher's professional journey. In relation to post-assessment moderation, teacher educators indicated that they engaged in conversation with colleagues or team leaders when there was concern or disagreement related to the outcome of an assessment of a student teacher. This collaborative approach reflects Sadler's (2012) position that when a qualitative, professional judgement is the basis for assessment decision making, then moderation is supported through consensus-based collaborative judgements based on academic standards, as evidenced in the findings of this study. Key informants stated that institutional practice was for difficult assessment decisions to be made in a collaborative way, so that teacher educators were given support and guidance.

Two of the institutions had policies in place to facilitate formal moderation of practicum, as a component of the overall moderation of the teacher education programme required by the accreditation and review cycle (NZTC, 2010). It was noted in the key informant interviews that formal moderation of practicum was seen as more problematic than paper-based assignments, and potentially viewed as more of a challenge to the professional judgment and autonomy of the teacher educators. For these reasons, formal moderation practices had been received with some tension, and moderation processes were still being resolved. However, given the findings of this study which position assessment as subjective exercise, moderation appears to play a critical role, especially when the outcomes for student teachers have such high stakes.

Moderation appears likely to be a focus of on-going review to determine best institutional practice, for as Adie, Lloyd and Beutal, (2013, p. 975) argue: "while we believe that moderation involving substantive conversations around the quality of work is integral to effective teaching and learning, we warn against viewing moderation in a simplistic or singular way".

7.2.4. Feedback

Feedback, both formative and summative, was seen to be one of the key tasks of practicum assessment, with the purpose of supporting the professional growth of the student teacher (White, 2005, 2007). Badger (2012) argues that the effectiveness of the practicum as a means of supporting professional growth is contingent upon the critical feedback of the associate teacher and teacher educator. The findings suggest that feedback is offered to the student at multiple points during the practicum, although as Turnbull (1999) found, the form and nature of such feedback is highly variable. Key informants report that institutions anticipate that associate teachers will provide on-going feedback throughout the practicum, while the assessment visit and triadic meeting were shown to be a time of intensive feedback from both the associate teacher and teacher educator. Analyses of the triadic assessment meetings revealed quite different patterns of feedback across the cases, reflecting the different approaches of the individual assessors. This finding supports Badger's (2012) contention that feedback is subjective, and guided by the expectations and intentions of the assessor. Use of Heron's Six Category Intervention Analysis (1990, in Randall & Thornton, 2001) revealed that the feedback offered to student teachers in each of the cases was variable in both amount and focus. In one of the cases, there was extensive reliance on supportive feedback, with little feedback to challenge the student teacher, or provide guidance for further growth. In the other cases, supportive feedback was also a significant feature, although feedback categorised as confronting or catalytic was more apparent. Further research that critiques the nature of feedback given during the triadic meeting would be of value.

In the survey and case study interviews, student teachers consistently identified affirmation of their practice as being the key valued outcome of practicum assessment. Students reported that they placed high value on positive feedback from those who they saw as expert, or whose opinion they valued (Tillema, Smith & Lesham, 2011). The results suggest that the feedback

offered does offer affirmation to students in highlighting areas of strength, and in identifying valued personal and professional characteristics. Associate teachers and teacher educators identified that providing affirmation and supportive feedback was an important function of the assessment act, however the results also highlight that affirmation may take precedence over feedback that would support the development of the student's practice. As Copland (2010) argues, student teachers may need support both before and during the practicum to enable them to receive assessment feedback in a way that promotes growth, rather than feeling defensive and disempowered.

7.2.5. Self-assessment

The findings of the present study indicated a limited role for the student teacher in the assessment process, and none at all in summative decision making. Student teachers were typically positioned by associate teachers and teacher educators as active participants in the practicum experience (Roberts & Graham, 2008; Turnbull, 2003), but much more passive and less agentic in relation to assessment. Data from the survey and interviews indicates that student teachers perceive assessment as a decision made by someone else about them, and do not view themselves as having a contributing role beyond providing evidence of their competence. This would appear to be problematic when one of the purposes of assessment is to in some way understand the student teacher's transformation as a result of participation in the practicum (Rogoff, 2003). Findings suggest an assumption at an institutional level that self-assessment will be captured within the process of reflection during the practicum, rather than being specified as a separate and unique task. Key informants indicated that student teachers were required to reflect on their own learning and developing practices within the practicum, both verbally and in writing, but there was little evidence to indicate that they were asked to move beyond this to evaluate themselves in light of expressed assessment criteria or learning outcomes. Such an approach runs counter to assessment approaches that position the student

teacher more centrally as an active contributor in the assessment process (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Iverson, et al., 2008). Iverson et al. (2008) argue that assessment should support student teachers to take increasing responsibility for evaluating their own learning and practice, and should even become partners in the assessment process. While practicum promotes a developmental approach in which student teachers are supported to show increasing skill and competence in community (practicum) endeavours (Rogoff, 2014), the same process is not applied to the assessment act itself. The findings do not suggest that during the course of study students are given increasing responsibility for their assessment. In fact the reverse may be true, as the final year of study is seen to be the most critical in relation to institutional assurance of competence before entering the profession.

Boud (1999) argues that there is a natural tension between the typical purposes of assessment, and those of reflection.

Assessment involves the presentation of one's best work, of putting a good case forward, emphasising what one knows, not what one doesn't know yet.

Reflection, on the other hand, is about exploration, focusing on a lack of understanding, questioning, probing discrepancies and so on. There is always the danger that assessment will obliterate the very practices of reflection which courses aim to promote. The assessment discourse celebrates certainty; reflection thrives on doubt. Perhaps one of the reasons that reflection is so often misapplied is because attempts are made to find ways to make it compatible with assessment practices, when perhaps it is those assessment practices that should be changed first. (p. 123)

The assumption, therefore, that self-assessment of the student teacher can be captured through the process of written or verbal reflection therefore appears to be problematic, especially when considered in light of findings that suggest student teachers feel the need to

be self-protective and put forward their best performance in order to achieve a pass for the practicum. It is likely that students will feel inhibited from sharing an open critique of their own practice; for fear that they may put themselves at risk of failing to meet established criteria.

7.2.6. Challenges

In each phase of the study, participants were asked to identify the key challenges faced in the assessment of practicum. The consistent issues identified across the three phases included the shared expectations, cost of practicum, workload issues, the need for quality early childhood settings, concern regarding the assessment feedback and outcomes, bias, and relationship difficulties. These concerns mirror those previously found in practicum literature in New Zealand (Haigh, 2001, 2005; Haigh & Ell, 2014; Hawe, 2001; Grudnoff, 2011) and internationally (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Ortlipp, 2009; Rorrison, 2010; Smith, 2005).

Rogoff (2003) contends that as people participate in communities, they develop a repertoire of cultural practice and mutual agreement around practices, beliefs and values. One of the challenges evident throughout the study was the potential for discordance between the institutional culture, the culture of the practicum site and the individual participants. The emphasis placed on the individual professional judgment was shown at times to be at odds with the expressed standards and criteria of the institution. The student teacher in particular is then left in the difficult position of needing to navigate between the institutional culture, and the practicum culture, making decisions regarding which repertoire of practice they should be adopting in a given situation. The often short term nature of practicum experiences also appears to inhibit the process of negotiation of practice that might take place in a more established, long term community (Wenger, 1998).

At an institutional level, the cost of practicum was an often cited concern. Lack of funding and budgetary constraints are seen to limit the possibilities in the way practicum is offered and assessed. Key informants acknowledged that there are alternative approaches and strategies that institutions could adopt, if there was sufficient funding to both initiate and sustain such changes in the long term. Ortlipp (2009) similarly cited institutional funding as a significant constraint in minimising the amount of dialogue that can take place between the triad participants. With more funding, teacher educators could visit more frequently, and have more sustained relationships with the education settings over time, that could facilitate a greater level of shared understanding, and foster enhanced collaboration between the two key sites of ITE programmes. However, given the current economic and political climate in New Zealand it appears unlikely that institutions offering ITE programmes will receive substantial increase in funding and therefore they must look for innovative ways of enhancing on-going collaboration with education settings in sustainable ways (Grudnoff, 2010, 2011).

Associate teachers and teacher educators also acknowledged that time and workload constraints inhibited the opportunity for enacting the assessment of practicum in ways that were seen as more effective, in particular the opportunity to spend time alongside the student and engage in professional dialogue that supported professional growth (Grey, 2011; Haigh 2005). Support of student teachers on practicum is only one element of the multiple roles that associate teachers and teacher educators fill on a daily basis. As in Beck and Kosnick's (2000) study, associate teachers reported that they would like to have more time with student teachers, but their commitment to the children and families in the early childhood centre was paramount. At times participants identified tension between the expectations of student teachers and the reality of the contribution of the associate teachers during the practicum, suggesting the need for more open discussion and articulation of the expectations of each role. There was also acceptance that the opportunity to visit students more than once on a

practicum would strengthen the assessment process, but cost and workload typically made this prohibitive for most institutions; in particular those with larger cohorts of student teachers, or those offering practicum placements over a wide geographical area. Key informants suggested that institutions are looking at ways to make better use of advancing technologies to increase the interaction of the student teacher and teacher educator during the practicum in meaningful ways that may attenuate some of the challenges raised by having only one visit (McLoughlin, Brady, Lee & Russell, 2008).

Reiterating the findings of Kane's (2005) review, organising practicum placements in quality early childhood settings, with effective associate teachers to mentor students, was the greatest concern for each of the four institutions. Payment for associate teachers, competition for places and limited opportunity to physically review all practicum settings or individually select associate teachers were frequently cited as constraints. Echoes of these concerns were also evident in both the survey and case study data, as students and teacher educators reported experiences of less than desirable practicum situations. Potential solutions were problematic, mainly due to the additional financial commitment required (Ortlipp, 2009). Regular visits to early childhood centres, alongside more rigorous selection processes for associate teachers would be costly, and would likely result in a reduced pool of associate teachers from which institutions could draw. The perceived lack of opportunity to shift the status quo led to some rationalisation of existing practices. For example, a common rationalisation reflected in these data was that a problematic practicum should be seen to support the growth of the student teacher's philosophy as it alerts students to the reality of less than desirable practices, and affirms for the student the practices that they would value instead. However, this process cannot be assumed to occur automatically, as it requires a high level of reflection, meta-cognitive processing and professionalism to bring about growth in professional practice (Haigh, 2005). It is likely that students will need skilled support from the

institution/teacher educator to reflect on such experiences in a meaningful and positive way. Results revealed little evidence to suggest such extensive support is in place.

A concern noted across the three phases related to cases where the assessment feedback provided by the associate teacher or teacher educator was seen to be uninformed, unexpected, unsubstantiated, or unfair. Assessment was seen to be uninformed when the associate teacher was not present for much of the time during the practicum, but appeared to offer assessment feedback based on seemingly little knowledge of the student's actual practice. Results indicate both students and teacher educators felt blindsided by negative feedback when previous contact had indicated no concerns. Teacher educators found it difficult when the feedback from the associate teacher did not reconcile with their own observations and judgments of the student, raising questions of whose feedback should be given primacy in the decision making (Ortlipp, 2009).

The work of Ortlipp (1996), Murray-Harvey, et al. (1999) and Nuttall and Ortlipp (2012) highlight that bias is a risk within practicum assessment, in particular the response to students who are culturally and linguistically diverse, which was confirmed in the current study. At an institutional level, key informants acknowledged that bias was of concern and that there was a need for awareness and an institutional response to addressing the concerns raised by student teachers and assessors. One institution was offering specific support to culturally and linguistically diverse students in order to better prepare them for the practicum experience in early childhood settings. Other forms of bias were also noted by participants, most often in relation to personal characteristics of the student or discrimination based on factors such as the institution the student attended. Almost all teacher educators and associate teachers had some experience of bias during practicum, although reports from student teachers were much less frequent, which suggests that there is the need for those in ITE to raise awareness of bias,

and work collaboratively with the practicum participants to openly address concerns and identify possible solutions.

7.2.7. When a student is not meeting practicum assessment expectations

Not every student teacher is successful in their practicum experiences. Results from the survey indicate failure is a reality that impacts on the assessors as well as the students themselves (Siebert, et al., 2006). The causes of, and responses to failure are complex, challenging and emotional (Hastings, 2008). It is at the point of failure that the tension between the needs of the student, and the responsibility to the greater sector, come into stark relief. Data indicate that the potential for failure in practicum is also seen to be an indicator of the integrity of the ITE programme, but there is a great deal of compassion for the student in such a situation. Key informants and teacher educators alike report that the decision to award a fail grade to a student is made only after a great deal of consideration, and typically is a final act after other avenues have been tried. When concerns are raised about a student, the strategies identified across the institutions included the following: having another teacher educator visit to reassess the student; extending the length of the practicum to allow more time to meet required outcomes; allowing the student the opportunity to repeat the practicum in another setting; and providing increased programme support for the student while on practicum. These strategies mirror those reported by Kane (2005), although greater understanding is needed as to whether these responses are effective in supporting students at risk.

The final decision to award a fail grade rests with the institution. Associate teachers cited as one of their concerns that the outcome of such cases may not be communicated to them once the practicum has concluded. In illustration, concerns may be raised at the time of the visit, but the decision not made until a later point following discussion and decisions at the institutional level. The associate teacher can then be left feeling unsure whether their

feedback had been taken seriously by the institution and what has happened post-practicum. Such experiences highlight some of the challenges of a practicum as a short-term event, and the value for institutions in developing sustained relationships with practicum sites, beyond the placement of individual students.

Smith (2007, p. 282) poses the question: “Do we assess what we actually see when observing teaching, or do we assess the potential competence for teaching which we believe we detect in the students?” This dilemma was raised by both the key informants and the teacher educators, as they questioned the appropriate response to a student teacher considered to be ‘borderline’ in their teaching practice. Such students are typically not meeting all of the required assessment criteria to the expected standard, but the associate teacher and/or teacher educator consider there is potential that with further time and support, the student will meet the expectations. Such cases became problematic when the anticipated growth does not eventuate, and the student faces the potential of failure in the final year of the programme. The tension between what is and what might be was seen as difficult to resolve, as both associate teachers and teacher educators expressed their preference to foster the strengths of the student and allow time for change and growth.

7.2.8. Status quo and institutional innovations

Joughin (2009) posits that we research assessment because we want to see change in current practices, but that large scale change, especially in higher education, is hard to find. The findings of this study evidence a model of practicum assessment that is established and enduring, as shown in the similarities to Turnbull’s (1999) description of assessment practices in a New Zealand ITE institution. The interviews with the institutional informants revealed passion, commitment and a desire for continued improvement at an institutional level that would support stronger outcomes for students and centres. Institutions acknowledged areas

where further development was needed, and were looking for ways in which to be innovative in the way practicum is enacted and assessed. However, the informants indicated a level of frustration and even resignation in the face of what were seen to be very significant constraints. It appears that constraints imposed at a political and institutional level serve to perpetuate the status quo of practicum. Significant change is seen as very challenging, especially the investment of fiscal and people resources. Situated in a post-recession, early-recovery economy, institutions face increasing fiscal pressures, and are looking to align themselves for future growth. While the participants and stakeholders may advocate for the value of alternative practices, for example, extending the duration and number of visits the student teacher receives, such change is not seen as sustainable in a reduced institutional budget. Research such as that by Grudnoff (2011) demonstrates small pockets of exciting innovation with positive outcomes. However, such innovations face challenges of scalability and sustainability in translating successful smaller projects into programme wide change, due to cost, availability of resources and time burdens. Innovations will often experience resistance to change as the status quo is challenged, particularly if such change would reposition the institution in the wider teacher education context. Initial teacher education institutions compete for the pool of potential students, and need to maintain their market share (Kane, 2005) which can make change and innovation seem risky and untenable.

Technological tools are seen as one possibility in shaping future innovations (Edwards, 2012; McLoughlin et al., 2008). E-portfolios played a very limited role across the institutions in this research, but were seen to have potential in enriching assessment practices by key informants. E-portfolios would support greater self-assessment, and offer opportunity for more immediate feedback to students (Dysthe & Engelsen, 2004). However issues of equity for students, and workload for teacher educators were key challenges that would need to be addressed. The key informant at Tahi in particular noted that while technological innovations had potential, not all

students may have ready access to the technology, and the cost may be prohibitive for some students which could then place them at a disadvantage. Technology was seen to be a tool for increasing the frequency and immediacy of communication and sharing of documentation between the student and the teacher educator. Teacher educators, however, expressed concerns about managing this increase in workload within their other commitments.

7.3. The beliefs, perceptions and experiences of key stakeholders

The second objective of this study was to '*critically examine the beliefs, perception and experiences of the key stakeholders in practicum assessment*'. The following section summarises the findings of the study in relation to the experiences of student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators. The contribution of each participant group to the assessment of practicum is highlighted, as well as the positive experiences and challenges reported by each group.

7.3.1. Student teachers

The findings of the current study support the notion that student teachers find practicum to be a rewarding, inspiring and highly valuable component of the initial teacher education programme (Smith & Lev Ari, 2005). Student teachers reported that they found the assessment of practicum most valuable when it provided feedback that affirmed their teaching practices, and supported them in identifying areas for future growth and development (Badger, 2012). However, the findings support previous research that student teachers also find the assessment of practicum to be stressful, challenging, anxiety producing and not always supportive of their professional growth (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Haigh, Ell & Mackisack, 2013; Grudnoff, 2011; Murray-Harvey, Silins & Saebel, 1999). While the practicum experience is often cited as a positive and rich learning experience, this study affirms that for a proportion of student teachers, the assessment experience is very difficult and can have long-

lasting consequences. The student teachers responses in the survey and case study interviews indicated that the most significant challenges that they faced in the assessment of their practicum related to uncertainty over expectations, unanticipated or unfair assessment outcomes, and conflict in the relationships with the assessors.

Student teachers in the study were very aware of the vulnerability of their role as student teachers (Cattley, 2007). The outcomes of assessment have significant consequences in determining the student's progress within the ITE programme, and ultimately, their entry into the teaching profession (Hegender, 2010). Student teachers identified that they felt vulnerable within the relational context of the practicum, as much of their experiences were dependent on their relationship with their associate teacher, other teachers in the setting, and the teacher educator (Haigh, 2001). Practicum requires students to successfully navigate entry into a new community context, rich with existing cultural practices, relationships, values and expectations that are unique to that setting (Rogoff, 2003). The student must quickly learn these features, initially as an observer, but then demonstrating a commitment to be present and contributing with initiative to increasingly mature endeavours (Rogoff, 2014). They must develop multiple relationships with the range of children, teachers and families in the early childhood setting, and failure to do so can leave the student feeling at risk.

In navigating successful participation in the setting, it is evident that student teachers may shape their practices in accordance to that which they observe. The 'need to please', as identified by Goodnough, et al., (2009) was manifest in these data. The students saw both associate teachers and teacher educators as being in positions of power due to their role in assessment, and actively shaped their practices in an effort to be seen positively and achieve a good assessment outcome. Student teachers indicated that they tried to interpret what each assessor would want, and were more anxious if they could not determine likely expectations.

The 'need to please' was evident in the case studies as the student teachers presented particular activities they felt the teacher educator would want to see, even when this was not in line with their typical practice. Findings suggest that student teachers experience a measure of agency in some practicum experiences (Roberts & Graham, 2008; Turnbull, 2003) but that assessment requirements can perpetuate compliance and conformity.

The findings of this study mirror those of Ligadu (2005), Murray-Harvey, et al., (1999) and Mau (1997) who reported that student teachers find the practicum experience to be stressful and the assessment process particularly anxiety producing. Student teachers were more likely than associate teachers and teacher educators to ascribe a negative description to their practicum assessment experiences. Harwell and Moore (2010) found that student teachers' greatest concern was their performance while on practicum and the way it would be interpreted by assessors. Students reported feelings of stress and anxiety prior to the assessment visit but subsequently rated the experience positively, suggesting that the thought of assessment may be more anxiety producing than the actual experience, a finding supported by the comments of students in the case study. Positive assessment experiences can to some measure relieve students' concerns. However, it is apparent that students enter into the assessment process with some fear, which may impact on their performance during the time of the visit. One teacher educator in the study acknowledged this, commenting that she does what she can at the beginning of the visit to reduce the student's concerns and anxiety, and establish a more positive foundation for the visit. That anxiety and stress are so frequently identified by student teachers, both in the extant literature and the present study, is of concern, and requires a range of responses at the institutional, interpersonal and individual level. Attending to assessment within an holistic, cultural model, requires attention to student welfare and well-being, support for participants to manage stress and anxiety, and acknowledgement that assessment outcomes may be impacted.

As reported by Haigh (2005), students' preconceptions and past practicum experiences had a significant bearing on a current practicum. Student teachers in the survey and case study report that past experiences shaped the way in which they expected to be assessed in current/future practicums; sometimes positively, sometimes negatively. The findings support Rogoff's (2003) argument that the way an individual responds to a given situation is determined by prior experiences in which they have participated. Each practicum becomes a reference point for subsequent assessment experiences, as students draw on their past experiences of practicum and assessment to understand and make decisions in the present situation. Findings suggest that students draw on these past experiences to determine expected practices of assessment, e.g. the student who commented that no-one explained the format of the visit, but that she assumed it would be just like the visits she had before. At a deeper level, student teachers also reported a strong emotional response to past experiences that shaped present experience, as for the student who carried the 'trauma' of her first practicum into the triadic meeting of each subsequent visit, with very heightened feelings of anxiety and fear that were not grounded in the current practicum in which she was receiving very positive feedback. That past experiences are so influential suggests the need for greater debriefing opportunities to allow students to achieve some resolution to difficult experiences, and support to make meaningful connections that encourage growth in practice and adaptive expertise (Rogoff, 2003).

Of greatest concern was that students so often believed there was little recourse available to them to address concerns related to the process or outcome of assessment. While empowering the student to have a sense of agency within the practicum is seen as a desired and possible outcome (Roberts & Graham, 2008; Turnbull, 2003), the findings of this study highlight that in relation to assessment, students feel that they have very little power. Even when student teachers reported that they took some action to address a concern, they felt the

response privileged the assessor. A hierarchical view of the triadic relationship was clearly evident across all phases, created in large part by the requirement for final decision making to reside with the teacher educator, as well as culturally determined beliefs about professional role identification. The present findings echoed Haigh's (2001) case study in which the student teacher did not seek to challenge the associate teacher or teacher educator, even when there was opportunity to do so. The student teachers positioned the teacher educators as powerful due to their role in determining the summative outcome of the assessment, and indicated that they felt there was little point in contesting an assessment outcome, feeling their point of view would not be heard, or that they would make themselves vulnerable. This point of view was not shared by the teacher educators, who typically reported that they valued working collaboratively within the triad and open communication where concerns could be discussed. There is an urgent need to address the discrepancy between the perspective of student teachers and their assessors, and to open avenues where students feel that it is worthwhile and meaningful to share concerns about their experiences of practicum assessment.

7.3.2. Associate teachers

The results of this study across all phases reinforce the key role of the associate teacher in undertaking formative assessment of the student teacher during the practicum (McDonald, 2005a; Sinclair, 1997). For the majority of the practicum, the associate teacher has the primary responsibility for guiding the student teacher and supporting their developing professional practice (Beck & Kosnik, 2000). The associate teacher is the daily presence throughout the practicum, whereas the teacher educator is present for only a short amount of time. Associate teachers were seen by the key informants and teacher educators to have the greatest opportunity to determine the student's achievement of specified criteria in the 'natural' setting of the early childhood setting, on multiple occasions, over a length of time, supporting the authenticity of the assessment (Haigh, 2001). In the model of teacher education identified

in this study across institutions, much is asked of associate teachers, in supporting, guiding and assessing student teacher, with the guided participation model described by Rogoff (2003) clearly in evidence. From the stories of success and concern that participants shared it seems that at best, the associate teacher can be a powerful voice of influence, fostering a relationship that provides a rich balance of affirmation and challenge that supports the student teacher's professional growth. At worst, the associate teacher can seem distant, disconnected, uninterested or openly negative, providing few opportunities for students to flourish. The associate teacher can be open to innovation and learning from the student, or can perpetuate and reinforce poor practices (Sinclair, 1997).

The findings of the study support those of Coll, Taylor and Grainger (2002) in suggesting that associate teachers feel confident in their role primarily as a result of their position and experience as a teacher, but are not always clear on the institutional expectations and nature of their role, especially in relation to assessment. The associate teachers reported that they drew extensively from their professional knowledge and teaching experience in guiding student teachers, and in making assessment decisions, reinforcing the notion that practicum is a culturally mediated act (Rogoff, 2003). However, Sinclair (1997) warns that such reliance on cultural values and personal experience may serve to perpetuate existing practices, and limit the opportunity of the student teacher to practice innovative or different approaches to teaching. She further argues that the emphasis placed on personal experience can lead to idiosyncratic interpretations of assessment criteria, as associate teachers impose their own understandings and expectations, as was evident in these results.

Beck and Kosnik (2000) argue that to address concerns regarding the role and contribution of the associate teacher, it is imperative that ITE institutions consider the way in which selection, induction and training are provided to associate teachers. The outcome of their study

suggested that closer partnerships between the education setting and the institution can achieve greater alignment of assessment expectations and repertoires of practice, increased mutuality of understanding between participants, and enhanced the contribution of the associate teacher. The key informants in the present study acknowledged the critical importance of working more collaboratively and in closer partnership with associate teachers, and identified ways in which they were working to effect change in this area. However, informants acknowledged feeling stymied in finding ways to enhance partnership that elicited the buy-in of a large proportion of associate teachers, in a meaningful and sustainable way. Beck and Kosnik (2000) found that at times associate teachers actively resisted efforts to engage them further in training or professional development, feeling that their teaching experience was sufficient to fulfil their role, and that other obligations in their teaching role needed to take precedence. Informal approaches that focused on increasing the presence of teacher educators in the education setting were seen as valuable, as were facilitating clusters of associate teachers who supported each other and provided feedback. However, this model was enacted in a primary school setting, where there were multiple associate teachers and student teachers in one setting. Early childhood settings may have only one associate teacher within the team, limiting the opportunity for a group of associate teachers to meet for support, and making it more challenging for teacher educators to have a more regular presence in the settings.

Survey data revealed there was a significant proportion of associate teachers who had limited training and support for their role, and actively desired more. This supports the findings of Beck and Kosnik (2000) and Sinclair (1997) who identified that associate teachers typically had little induction to the role, and limited ongoing support. Given that the current study supports the contention that associate teachers play a significant role in providing formative assessment, and contributing to the final summative assessment, greater investment in

supporting associate teachers in assessment and feedback skills appears of paramount importance.

The responses of associate teachers reveal that participating in the assessment of practicum is not simply a professional task. The associate teachers entered into relationships with the student teachers, and experienced a range of emotions in participating in the assessment process, as also found by Hastings (2008). Associate teachers reported feelings of concern, uncertainty and worry, at times feeling the need to protect or advocate for student teachers during the assessment process. As Hastings (2008) suggests, there appears to be little support for associate teachers when facing a difficult practicum case, and lack of transparency on behalf of the institution when resolving difficult issues was of great concern. There appears to be a need for the ITE institutions to take a more purposeful and proactive role in supporting associate teachers before, during and after the practicum.

7.3.3. Teacher educators

The teacher educators in this study played a very significant role in the assessment of practicum as the intermediary between the institution, the education setting and the student. They were positioned by the institution, and thus by associate teachers and student teachers, as having the primary responsibility for determining the final assessment outcome of the practicum. During their visits to the early childhood setting there are multiple roles that they are required to fill. Teacher educators identified that they were responsible for observing the student, providing feedback, gaining the perspectives of others in the practicum, listening to the student teacher and associate teacher, understanding context, synthesising multiple points of view, resolving conflict, representing the institution, supporting the associate teacher and student teacher, and maintaining professional relationships. At times these multiple roles were

challenging, and potentially in conflict. For teacher educators, the assessment of practicum is viewed as complex and multi-dimensional.

The teacher educators identified successful experiences of assessment as being when the triadic relationships were functioning well, when assessment identified and acknowledged the strengths of the student teacher, and provided support and guidance for future professional development. Open, honest communication, evidence of concerns, and alignment between the perspectives of participants was hoped for. Teacher educators in this study demonstrated concern for student teachers, consistent with studies such as Haigh (2001), and a desire for practicum experiences to facilitate the professional growth of the student teacher in the context of rich, positive relationships (Smith, 2007). The teacher educators reported genuine care for the student teacher and distress over practicum cases where the experience was less than positive for the participants.

Haigh (2001, p. 9) found that the “general purpose of the [teacher educator] was considered to be ‘supportive and constructive’, with formative assessment aspects being preferred to summative”, a perspective supported by these data. The way in which teacher educators perceived their role in the assessment of practicum did not always align with the perception of student teachers and associate teachers; in particular with regard to formative and summative assessment purposes. While student teachers tended to focus on the teacher educator as having the power to determine the assessment outcome (Turnbull, 1999), teacher educators themselves indicated that the opportunity to provide formative feedback, support and guidance to the student was the key focus of the assessment visit. The reports of teacher educators in this study were also similar to those expressed by Cuifetelli-Parker and Volante (2009), in which the teacher educators were invested in the professional growth of student teachers and sought to contribute to this through the course of the assessment visit.

Tension between formative and summative assessment functions in the assessment visit is often noted as a challenge for teacher educators (Smith, 2007), as each practicum visit serves a dual formative and summative purpose; to enhance student practice and to judge competence. However, the teacher educators in this study did not appear to find this tension of purpose as challenging as reported in other studies (Tillema, Smith & Lesham, 2011). Responses from the teacher educators suggested that the balance of formative and summative functions was determined in response to the perceived needs and/or competence of the student teacher. Of note was that there was agreement that formative assessment was given greater weighting in the first two years of the programme of study, with summative assessment purposes considered more significant when the student was in the final year of their study.

Teacher educators in this study adopted a responsive approach to practicum assessment in order to address the unique context of each practicum situation. One of the functions of the assessment visit identified by both key informants and teacher educators was for the teacher educator to evaluate the nature of the associate teacher/student teacher relationship. When this relationship was seen to be strong, the teacher educator reported they took more of a monitoring and supportive role, whereas if there were concerns and the dyad was not operating successfully, the teacher educators took a more direct role in guiding the assessment process. Teacher educators also identified the need to respond to each case individually, even within typical guidelines, in order to support the best outcome for the student teacher, as well as maintain relationships with the early childhood setting, a pattern also found by Haigh (2001).

The teacher educators in the current study reported that the biggest challenges they faced in the assessment of practicum related to the contribution of the associate teacher. Concern was

expressed about cases where the associate teacher did not provide appropriate support for the student teacher and where the assessment feedback from the associate teacher was perceived to be unfair, uninformed or inaccurate. Teacher educators expressed a desire for associate teachers to provide written feedback that aligned with the verbal reports given during the practicum, and for concerns to be raised by associate teachers at the earliest point in the practicum, rather than waiting to the end where there is less opportunity for growth or resolution.

Viskovic (2009) suggests that teacher educators are often appointed to their role on the basis of their knowledge, qualification and sector experience, and may have limited experience in teacher education. She further notes that teacher educators may rely more on 'tacit experiential knowledge' (p. 2) than theory-based understandings of teaching and learning. The findings from the online survey would suggest that teacher educators do privilege their experience in the early childhood sector as influencing their confidence and skill in assessing student teachers.

The findings of the study highlight issues regarding the induction and professional development of teacher educators in relation to practicum assessment. Findings indicate that induction typically involved the teacher educator shadowing a colleague for a few practicum visits, and then having a colleague accompany the teacher educator on their first visit, a form of "unstructured professional apprenticeship" (Viskovic, 2009, p. 5). Key informants indicated that induction would be determined by and responsive to the individual needs of the teacher educator and their prior experiences as a practicum assessor. The study also indicated that there were only limited pockets of professional development targeted to the assessment of practicum, often tied to moments of institutional change in assessment practice. These findings support Viskovic's (2009, p. 8) assertion that "many tertiary teachers do not receive a

substantial education for their teaching role, and that their teaching-related continuing professional development is also not extensive". Abbreviated induction and limited professional support may serve to perpetuate the emphasis on professional judgement based on prior experience. The result is minimal opportunity to engage in discussion for the purpose of critical reflection and reaching mutuality of understanding between colleagues and other stakeholders (Rogoff, 2003).

Smith (2007, p. 281) proposes the notion of 'professional autonomy' as the space in which teacher educators make assessment decisions, shaped by their values, beliefs and professional knowledge, requiring courage and imagination. The assessment practices described by the teacher educators, and evidenced in the case studies reflected a high level of professional autonomy. The assessment process was not simply a matter of checking a pre-defined list of criteria – rather the criteria were used by teacher educators (to varying degree) as just one measure in assessment decision making. The teacher educators drew on their prior experience, personal expectations and professional knowledge to synthesise multiple points of evidence in order to both provide feedback to the student and determine the assessment outcome. The findings present an understanding of such decision making as individual, culturally mediated, complex and nuanced.

7.4. Factors which support authentic assessment of practicum

The final research objective that guided this study was '*to identify the factors which create authentic assessment of the student teachers' practice during practicum*'. Sluijsmans, Straetmans and Mirrienboer (2008) describe authentic assessment as assessment which focuses on the student's achievement of criteria while demonstrating meaningful tasks in the professional situation. The practicum experience is seen to be an authentic teaching experience (Iverson et al., 2008) as the student teacher is engaged in the real-world setting of

the early childhood centre and given the opportunity to demonstrating developing competence in the typical practices of the setting. Findings supported the contention that student teachers do become part of the early childhood community, with the expectation that they will notice, learn and contribute in meaningful ways (Rogoff, 2003). In line with Rogoff's Learning through Observation and Pitching In (LOPI) model, the learning and development of the student teacher is seen to occur as a result of observing experienced teachers and becoming increasingly involved in the practices of teaching and learning (Rogoff, 2014). They are immersed in the setting, and development is supported through observation and guided participation into implementation of increasingly complex practices. Practicum takes the student from the more theoretical orientation of the institution, to the site of meaningful, authentic practice. Associate teachers and teacher educators observe student teachers during this process of participation, making decisions about the student's increasing demonstration and mastery of valued practices. Findings suggest that the understanding of authentic assessment shared by the key stakeholders is less focused on the nature of specific assessment tasks in the setting, but rather, the way in which assessment captures an accurate, genuine understanding of the student teacher and their demonstration of required, and desired, competencies.

The importance of the interpersonal relationship between the student teacher and assessor was articulated at the institutional level and by each participant group as central to ensuring authentic assessment outcomes (McDonald, 2005a). When the practicum relationships are positive and mutually engaging, then student teachers feel that they are 'known' and valued for their participation, and that the assessors have been able to observe them in an authentic way. This finding echoes the position of Iverson et al. (2008), that when student teacher and assessor are able to share knowledge and construct understanding together then the assessment judgements are more accurate and informed.

There was strong agreement between student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators that authentic assessment required understanding of the context within which the assessment was conducted. Clear resonance is evident here with Rogoff's (2003) contention that it is essential to consider the way in which institutional, interpersonal and individual cultural values, beliefs and practices interplay within development. Contextual understanding was seen as important in allowing the assessor to understand why a student teacher was responding in a particular way in a given situation, as argued by Iverson et al. (2008). There was some suggestion that both student teachers and teacher educators felt that the associate teacher could contribute a more authentic assessment picture, because of their greater knowledge of the context of the practicum, a position supported by Goodfellow and Sumsion (2000). "We simply can't make judgements about the quality of any classroom based on one observation, or even a series of weekly observations... we need to know the teachers, the students, their histories and the ways the lessons and the activities fit into a greater whole" (Power & Perry, 2002, p. 408).

Gulikers, Bastiaens, Kirschner and Kester (2008, p. 403) argue that understanding of authentic assessment is "in the eye of the beholder". What is understood to be authentic by one participant in assessment, may not be seen in the same way by another. Certainly, the findings suggested that teacher educators were more convinced of the authenticity of their assessment than the student teachers. Gulikers et al. (2008) further argue that it is important to interrogate the student's perception of the assessment in order to understand the way the student has interpreted and acted upon the assessment expectations. The case studies affirmed that student teachers and associate teachers did not always share the same understanding of criteria, expected repertoire of practices or expectations of the assessment visit. Such misalignment was evident in the student teachers' reports that they chose to demonstrate specific activities (art or mat-times) because they felt this was what the teacher

educator would expect to see. The student teachers did not feel these tasks were authentic, as they did not necessarily respond to the typical flow of the early childhood setting, or the practice the student teacher would have demonstrated were they not being observed. Such activities were described in terms of 'performances'. However, the teacher educators in each of these cases reported no such expectation of the student, and declared that the priority in observing the student was to see genuine or typical practices.

Ciuffetelli-Parker and Volante (2009) argue that the summative purposes of the assessment visit can inhibit the opportunity for authentic assessment. Their reflections as teacher educators suggested that student teachers shaped their practices during the visit to meet the perceived expectations of the assessor, and that single visits gave little understanding of the overall picture of the student. Similar arguments were identified by the participants in both the survey and case study, and acknowledged by key informants at the institutional level. There appeared to be acceptance that the teacher educator could only gain a small glimpse of the student during the visit, and that this would not necessarily be authentic. The role of the associate teacher was thus seen as critical in providing a deeper understanding of the student within the context of the practicum (Beck & Kosnik, 2000). Such a perspective supports an argument for the associate teacher to be seen as more of an expert in the cultural context of the early childhood setting, and take a greater role in the assessment process. Such change would require traditional models of practicum assessment to be re-evaluated, a shift in existing, historical practice and some critical consideration of the role of assessment within practicum.

7.5. Summary

This chapter has presented a summary of findings across the three phases of the current study responding to the three core research objectives that guided the study. The assessment

practices typically adopted by ITE institutions have been explored, and challenges identified. Practicum assessment is positioned as both institutionalised and individualised, as assessors work in unique ways within institutional parameters to respond to each case. The chapter has then explored the experiences of the three key practicum participants - student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator - to determine their approach to practicum assessment and the challenges that they face. In conclusion, the way in which participants view the authentic assessment of practicum, and the relational and structural elements that they believe support authentic assessment have been identified. The following chapter presents a detailed conclusion to the thesis, arguing that practicum assessment is complex and problematic. A model that maps the influences on practicum assessment as identified in this study is presented, attending to key institutional, interpersonal and intrapersonal factors. The contribution of the study to the understanding of practicum assessment in initial teacher education in New Zealand is articulated, the strengths and weaknesses of the study identified and suggestions for future research proposed.

Chapter Eight - Conclusion: Theorising the influences of practicum assessment

8.1. Introduction

Rorrison (2010, p. 515) in the conclusion to her study states; “By listening purposefully to the messages presented by the themes that emerge from the readers’ responses in this study, a sense of humanity, difference and inequitable practicum experiences challenges our current view of the practicum”; a sentiment that is reinforced in the findings of the present study. This study has shown that the assessment of practicum can have many positive outcomes for the student teachers as well as their assessors. However, the stories shared by individual participants alerts us to the reality that for some student teachers the practicum, and associated assessment, is not always a positive experience. The findings of this study confirm that assessment of practicum is a complex act that is influenced by many variables (Haigh, 2005). In this chapter, the contribution of this study to the understanding of practicum assessment is identified, and a model is proposed to illuminate the multiple variables that influence the lived experience of the practicum participants. The issues that confront initial teacher education in shaping future policy and practice will then be explored, the limitations of the study examined and key issues for future research identified. A final summary of the answers to the research question is presented.

8.2. Contribution of this study to the research on practicum assessment

This study was designed with the intent to be exploratory and illuminative (Punch, 2009). The assessment of practicum was identified as an under-researched area, especially in relation to the specific context of early childhood initial teacher education in New Zealand. The three phases of the research yielded an extensive range of data that captured the perspectives of the initial teacher education institutions and key triad participants. The findings provide

greater understanding of the way in which practicum assessment is enacted, the way it is experienced by the participants, and the issues and challenges it presents.

This study added a unique perspective to the understanding of practicum assessment through the use of Rogoff's (2003) planes of analysis as a framework for the research design, analyses and presentation of results. The ability to foreground specific elements of practicum assessment allowed for an in-depth understanding of institutional, intrapersonal and interpersonal factors to be illuminated. Data collection in three distinct phases using a variety of methods supported triangulation of the data, allowing for consideration of similarities and differences between each of the sources. Final analyses suggest that there is, in general, shared agreement about the intent and purpose of practicum assessment, and an 'ideal' of what practicum assessment should look like in practice. All participants espoused commitment to a model of practicum assessment with a focus on formative assessment. Feedback that identified the strengths and weaknesses of student teachers' practice and supported on-going personal and professional growth and teacher identity was seen as critical, within the context of rich, positive, professional mentoring relationships.

The study reveals that participants share many similar beliefs about the purpose and best practice of practicum assessment. However, there was acknowledgement that these shared beliefs do not always translate into practice in individual cases, and assessment is challenging and problematic for some student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators. There is marked agreement across the three phases about the challenges that are experienced during practicum assessment, which reveals that institutions are not unaware of the issues that face teacher educators, associate teachers and student teachers. The challenge for institutions is to resolve the challenges that typically occur in the intrapersonal and interpersonal realms, where the institution has least control.

This study adds to the extant knowledge of practicum assessment by articulating the practices that are typically used by assessors to determine the outcome of practicum, an area that has not previously been examined with the depth and breadth of the present study. The findings showed the consistency of assessment practices across the four institutions, but also revealed that the way in which these practices are utilised by assessors is highly individualised. This was most apparent in the case studies, in which observation, feedback, documentation and use of criteria were all in evidence to some measure, but each case study was enacted and experienced very differently based on the individual practices of the teacher educator, associate teacher and student teacher, and the interactions of the practicum triad.

This study also affirms the need for consideration of the individual in the assessment experience. The opportunity for participants to share their stories of both successful and concerning practicum assessment experiences was particularly valuable in offering the reminder that practicum assessment can affect all participants in both positive and negative ways. The assessment of practicum is not simply a professional exercise: it is also personal, with associated feelings and emotions, not only for the student teacher, but also for associate teachers, teacher educators and those that manage initial teacher education programmes (Mau, 1997; Moody, 2009).

The study further confirms the primacy of practicum relationships (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009) in providing the context for assessment. Students were most likely to report positive assessment experiences when their relationships with the associate teacher and teacher educator were functioning well, and felt most vulnerable in the assessment process when relationships were problematic. The study indicates that all members of the triad make choices in relation to voice and silence (Ortlipp, 2003) in order to maintain relationships.

The most significant contribution of the study was an understanding of the way in which multiple institutional, interpersonal and intrapersonal variables are at work in shaping the complex phenomenon of practicum experience. Through the key informant interviews, the reports of key participants and observing the case studies, it became apparent that every practicum assessment was unique, shaped by the confluence of multiple institutional, interpersonal and intrapersonal factors that determined the assessment experience and outcome. The following section draws on the key findings of the study to present a proposed model that illustrates the influences that shape the assessment of practicum.

8.3. A proposed model of the influences on practicum assessment

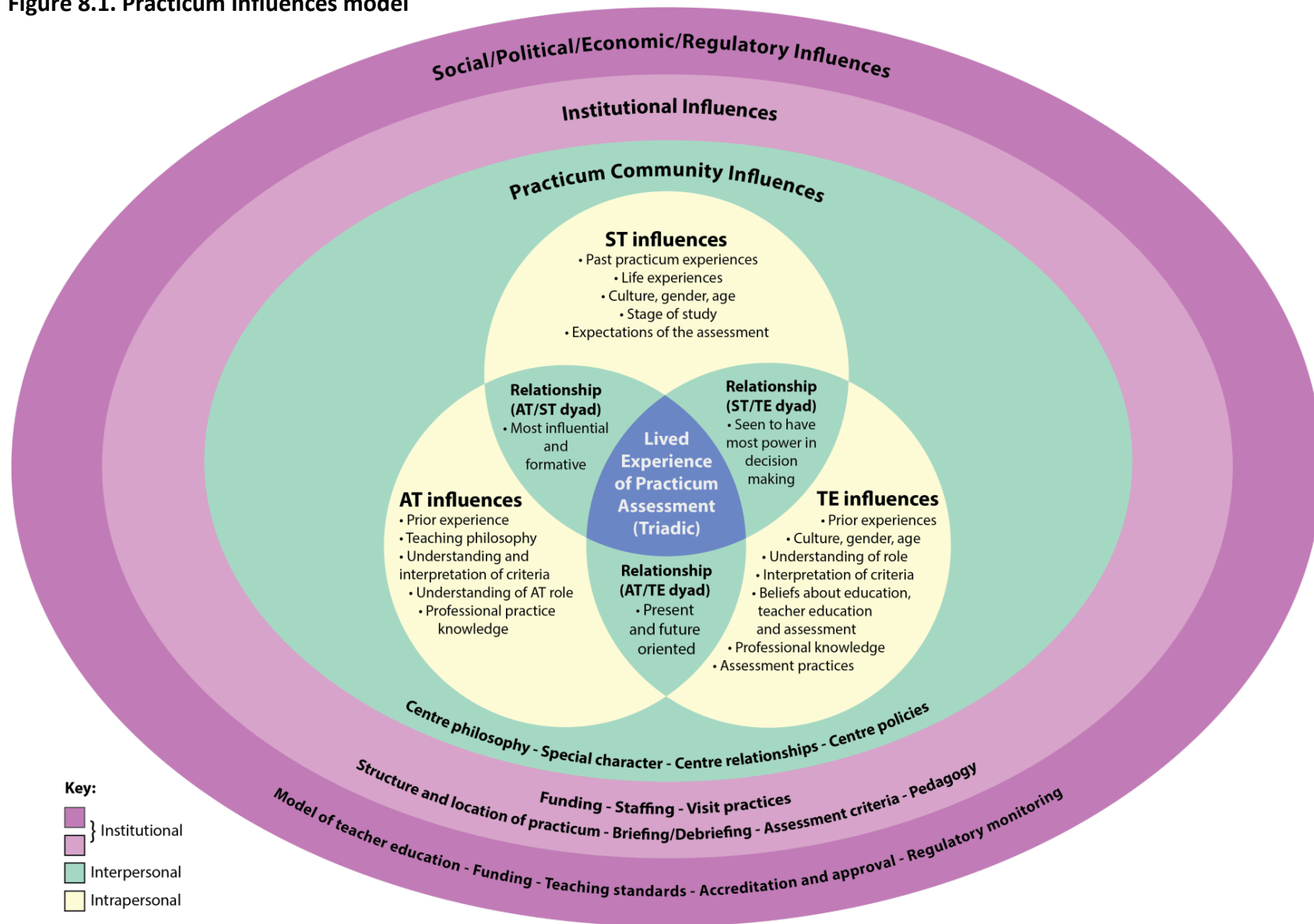
While illuminating the practices and lived experiences of practicum assessment was the intent of the current study, the findings provide understanding of the influences that interact to shape the final assessment experience. The results across all three phases of the research supported the contention that the lived experience of practicum assessment is the outcome of the unique confluence of multiple institutional, interpersonal and intrapersonal variables.

While there are finite assessment outcomes - the student teacher will ultimately either pass or fail the practicum - the process leading to this final outcome is unique in every single case. The proposed model returns to Rogoff's (2003) planes of analysis as a framework for illustrating the range of influences that are significant in shaping the lived experience of practicum assessment. Rogoff's theorising of multiple planes of analysis has been a cohesive thread throughout this study, more so than envisaged at the outset of this research journey. The notion of using different lenses to foreground institutional, interpersonal and intrapersonal elements of a given situation was instrumental in shaping the initial conceptualisation of the study, the research design and the subsequent data analysis. These planes of analysis are now drawn on to provide a framework within which to conceptualise the influences of practicum assessment. The proposed model applies a socio-cultural lens (Rogoff, 2003) to consider the

influences that shape the way in which assessment practices are enacted during practicum. The identification of key influences offers a means of mapping the route to assessment experiences and outcomes, identifying key points of critique and evaluation for those who provide initial teacher education, as well as foreshadowing a future research agenda. Figure 8.1 presents the proposed model, and subsequent discussion offers an explanation of each element.

The Practicum Influences model presented in Figure 8.1 locates the lived experience of practicum assessment at the centre. This focal point encompasses the way in which the student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator experience assessment, from the first moments of practicum, through to the final assessment decision and its consequences. These experiences and their significance have been identified and discussed in detail in previous chapters. Surrounding this lived experience are the institutional, intrapersonal and interpersonal influences that have been identified as significant in the current study.

Figure 8.1. Practicum Influences model



8.3.1. Institutional influences

At the outermost circle of the model lies the socio-political-regulatory context in which initial teacher education provision resides. Practicum is shaped in both ideological and pragmatic ways as a result of historical, cultural, and economic conditions. This model attempts to address the challenge presented by Mitchell, Clarke and Nuttall (2007, p. 24) who argue that:

The relationships between co-operating [associate] teachers, student teachers and universities needs to be conceptualised beyond the triadic structure, in order to take into account the ways in which these relationships are shaped by policy and political decisions of schools, districts, professional associations, certifying agencies and universities.

Government agencies shape the provision of initial teacher education in New Zealand.

Cameron and Baker (2004) in their review of literature related to initial teacher education note that in the past twenty years a variety of agencies have attempted to determine the standards for teaching and teacher education, including the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), the Teacher Registration Board, the Ministry of Education and the Educational Review Office (ERO). At the present time, the Government mandates approaches to education and the way teachers should be prepared through funding agencies such as the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and accreditation agencies such as the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC), the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP). The Tertiary Education Commission serves a dual role in managing Government funding for tertiary education, as well as monitoring the performance of tertiary providers. As a Crown Enterprise, TEC reports directly to the Minister of Tertiary Education, provides guidance related to tertiary study, and implements policy directives from the Minister on behalf of the Government. Through TEC, funding to initial teacher education institutions is tied to demonstration of desired programmes of study. For example, the

General Supplementary Plan Guidance for 2013 Plans for all TEOs (TEC, 2012) indicated the preference for teaching to become a graduate qualification, which is now being enacted through pilots of Masters degrees in Teaching and Learning for primary and secondary initial teacher education at six of New Zealand's universities.

Although now in the process of being disestablished, and replaced with an independent professional body (Barback, 2013), the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC) at this time provides the regulatory framework within which all ITE institutions must seek accreditation and approval. As noted by Kane (2005), it is likely that many of the similarities in approach to practicum in the four institutions in this study arise from the shared regulatory requirements as specified in the *Approval, Review and Monitoring Processes and Requirements for Initial Teacher Education Programmes* (NZTC, 2010). This regulatory framework outlines the requirements for number, range and duration of practica, as well as specifying the appointment of an associate teacher and assessment visits from the institution. The NZTC has also held responsibility for determining, communicating and enforcing the standards expected of student teachers graduating from initial teacher education programmes. These are currently expressed as the Graduating Teacher Standards (NZTC, 2010), shown in this study to play a very significant role in the development of ITE programmes and reflected in the practicum assessment criteria of each institution. These regulatory agencies have a significant influence in the way practicum is offered and assessed and in determining the resources available. Change is likely to the specification of teaching standards following the transition from the New Zealand Teachers Council to the yet to be determined independent professional body; for example, one of the proposed changes is for greater specification of practice within sectors of education, including early childhood (Barback, 2013).

The site of initial teacher education is also influenced by socio-political forces. Current teacher education models generally place the primary responsibility for teacher education with accredited ITE institutions, with schools and early childhood centres playing a supporting role during practicum. The impact of this model on practicum assessment is that the institution is thus positioned as having the primary responsibility for summative assessment decision making, as was evident in this study. Recent media coverage of a think-tank report, *Teaching Stars: Transforming the education profession* (Brown & Patterson, 2014) suggests that models where the school or centre is the main site of training are being touted as an alternative approach to teacher education; a return to apprenticeship models that were dominant prior to the institution-based models (Partington, 1997). Such a shift in approach would likely reposition who was responsible for assessing student teachers, and potentially the criteria for assessment.

Wider social and cultural influences sit alongside political influences in this realm. Beliefs about childhood, parenting, teaching and education are reflected in teacher education programmes, shaped by consultation with stakeholder groups. The significance of social demographics such as birth rates, coupled with shifting social norms and increased acceptance and uptake of early childhood services has a direct impact on the demand for teacher education provision and the means by which it is provided. The professionalisation of the early childhood sector and greater alignment with teaching in other educational sectors has been significant in shaping the content of early childhood teacher education programmes (Dalli, 2010). Social and cultural understandings of what is considered 'good teaching' in early childhood are reflected in the criteria for assessment established in each institution. One key example in this study related to bicultural practice and effective teaching in the context of diversity. Assessment criteria across all four institutions indicated the value placed on supporting graduates to be increasingly skilful in biculturally appropriate teaching practices, with an emphasis on the use

of te reo Māori, nga Tikanga Māori and greater understanding of Te Ao Māori, a Māori worldview. Such emphases reflect a wider social shift in New Zealand in advocating for the rights of Māori as tangata whenua, and greater understanding of the experiences of Māori children in education, for example, as outlined in the most recent version of *Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013–2017* (Ministry of Education, 2012).

Moving inwards, the next sphere in the model is the realm of the initial teacher education institution, representing those who have the responsibility for developing and delivering accredited initial teacher education. At this time in New Zealand, ITE programmes are offered by Universities, Polytechnics and Private Training Establishments (PTEs) (Kane, 2005). In other teacher education models this institutional realm could represent schools or early childhood centres that held responsibility for delivering programmes. These institutions are charged with developing effective, quality teacher education programmes that support the professional growth of student teachers and are accountable for ensuring that graduates meet agreed standards before entering the teaching profession (NZTC, 2010). Institutions are the intermediary between the practicum participants and stakeholders, and the wider socio-political context. As such they carry a dual responsibility – they are both gatekeeper to the teaching profession and the source of professional and pastoral care to the individual participants. They must balance individual needs with the greater good of professional accountability to future children, families and communities.

The significance of the institutional policies and practices established in this realm in determining the way in which assessment is enacted is profound. Decisions at this institutional level determine the role and expectations of key participants, the way practicum is structured, the relationships that are fostered, the criteria that are measured and the processes that are followed to determine assessment outcomes. As evidenced in this study, institutions establish

parameters for the assessment visit, and provide the induction, preparation and on-going professional development that supports the assessment participants. Furthermore, they set the assessment tasks, communicate the expected practices for each stage of study and hold the right to make the final assessment decision, having considered multiple evidence sources.

This study illuminated the significant role that the institution played in determining the format and context of the assessment of practices. However, the findings also suggest that while institutional parameters are evident in practice, they may be viewed more as guidelines by participants, especially the teacher educator and associate teacher. In particular, the case studies revealed that each practicum assessment was influenced by both interpersonal and intrapersonal variables (Rogoff, 2003).

8.3.2. Interpersonal influences

The next sphere in the model represents the practicum community within which the assessment takes place. In the justification for this study, the practicum was positioned as a temporary community, as defined by Rogoff (2003) in which there is shared communication, stability of involvement, a degree of commitment, mutual goal accomplishment and shared (sometimes contested) meaning. The early childhood centre community is in place before the student arrives for the time of practicum. During the practicum the student teacher enters into relationship with the associate teacher, but also with the other teachers in the setting, as well as the children, their families, and possibly the wider community. During the practicum the student's professional development is fostered through their participation in the community and their apprenticeship alongside more experienced teachers (Rogoff, 1998). Within the practicum relationships are formed and roles negotiated. In most practicum experiences there is a shared engagement in learning, as the student teacher works alongside the associate teacher and other teachers in the early childhood setting.

While the student teacher is typically positioned as the learner in the practicum, the findings of this study support the idea that associate teachers also see themselves as learners and value the contribution that the student teacher, and potentially the teacher educator bring to the relationship (McDonald, 2005a). This was particularly evident in the case study at Tahi.

Participation in the practicum community can be positive and rewarding, but this is not automatic. Time, knowledge, open communication and commitment to the practicum relationships are needed to ensure desired outcomes (Graves, 2010). Each of the case studies in this study reflected a positive practicum experience in which the student teacher was welcomed and supported within the setting. Warm, positive relationships with the other teachers and children were reported, and valued by the participants. However, responses in the key informant interviews and survey indicate that participation in the practicum community is not always positive and students may not feel welcomed into the community. They may at times be made to feel like an outsider within the community (Wenger, 1998), excluded from the dynamics of the community, and the practicum experience can be stressful and traumatic.

In analysing the way in which the practicum of assessment is enacted and experienced it is important to consider the nature of the practicum community and the way in which the community supports or inhibits the participation and development of the student teacher. Attention to the interpersonal relationships in the early childhood setting is critical (Beck & Kosnik, 2000).

It is important to consider the influence of this practicum community in the way assessment is enacted and experienced. The philosophy, policies and practices of the early childhood centre provide the context for the practicum, which needs to be considered in the assessment

process and to ensure informed assessment decision making. The need to understand the context of the practicum community was specifically noted by key informants in Phase One who acknowledged that institutional assessment practices needed to be flexible and responsive to the context of each practicum case. The influence of the early childhood centre's philosophy was particularly significant in two of the case studies, in that the philosophy directly shaped the role of the student teacher within the setting and the teaching practices that they were expected to perform. In the triadic meetings, these associate teachers took time to explain the philosophy and practices of the setting so that the teacher educator would be more informed in their assessment.

The role of other teachers in the early childhood setting and their contribution to, or influence on, the assessment of the student teacher has received little attention in research studies. However, the findings of the current study indicate that associate teachers do draw on the feedback from their colleagues as a component of their assessment decision making, and the wider teaching team may also be involved in providing formative feedback to the student teacher. In contrast, the families and children in the early childhood setting appear to play little role in the assessment of the student teacher, although there were a few comments from associate teachers and teacher educators that suggest it would be of value to gain the perspective of these members of the practicum community. How the inclusion of children and families in assessment would be facilitated in a meaningful and appropriate manner would be challenging, but would appear to fit within the assessment approach evident in this study, that already values multiple perspectives.

The interpersonal plane in this model also includes the points of intersection between the individual participants; the key assessment relationships between the student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator. For the majority of the practicum, the student

teacher/associate teacher dyad is the most significant relationship, with the triad typically not forming until the point of the assessment visit. Feedback from student teachers in this study confirms that their relationship with the associate teacher had the most significant impact on the practicum experience, consistent with previous research (Sanders, Dowson & Sinclair, 2005). Although the associate teacher/student teacher relationship is paramount in the practicum, the associate teacher/teacher educator and student teacher/teacher educator dyads were shown in this study to have an impact on the assessment of practicum. The relationship between the teacher educator and associate teacher was alternatively described by participants as a positive, open, collegial relationship, or positioned as problematic when the contribution of the associate teacher to the assessment was seen to be unfair, uninformed, or inaccurate. Associate teachers for the most part also positioned their relationship with the teacher educator positively and valued the connection with the institution, however concerns were raised when they felt that their role was not being valued, their contribution not heard, or there was a lack of explanation for assessment outcomes.

The dyadic relationships in the practicum appear to operate on two levels: professional and personal. The personal dimension encompasses the way in which the participants connect socially – whether there is warmth, care, friendship, kindness, collegiality and support. The professional dimension relates to the way in which the student teacher is supported and guided in their professional growth within the context of these relationships. There is some indication in the findings that the personal dimension of the relationships may take precedence over the professional, particularly in the associate teacher/student teacher dyad. This can potentially inhibit the feedback given, as participants seek to preserve and maintain relationships.

Challenges in the interpersonal dyads often arise as a result of the intrapersonal characteristics of the participants, the 'goodness of fit' between participants and the way in which they interact in a given situation. These characteristics will be explored further in the following section.

8.3.3. Intrapersonal influences

Each of the key participants – student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator – enter into the practicum experience with a pre-existing set of personal beliefs, values, dispositions, prior experiences, aspirations and anxieties that inform both their expectations of and engagement in the current experience (Pajares, 1992; Saracho & Spodek, 2003). These intrapersonal qualities determine the way in which the practicum experiences are understood and interpreted, and the choices and actions that result.

Consideration of the intrapersonal domain is challenging (Iverson, et al., 2008), because these characteristics are deeply personal, often private, sometimes unconscious, and yet exceptionally influential. This domain encompasses notions of individuality and identity (Cattley, 2007; Trent, 2010), the qualities that make each person distinctly unique. Influences on this level may not be visible to others, and may not be consciously understood by the individual themselves. One of the tasks of student teacher reflection in the practicum experience is to engage with intrapersonal beliefs and values (Norsworthy, 2005) in order that they might be identified and interrogated. This study did not explore the way in which teacher educators and associate teachers engage in reflection around their own beliefs and values and how they contribute to the assessment process; a valuable area for future research.

The findings highlight that the intrapersonal influences that shape practicum assessment included prior practicum experiences, education experiences, dispositions, personal qualities,

ethnicity, culture, values and beliefs. The personal philosophy of the participants is a strong influence. This philosophy encompasses not only beliefs around learning and teaching, but also beliefs around assessment, the purpose of practicum, and initial teacher education. All of these variables play a role in shaping the way in which participants engage in and interpret the practicum assessment experience. For all participants, their prior experience of practicum assessment was very significant, serving as reference and evaluation points. For example, student teachers would evaluate the relationship they had with an associate teacher against previous relationships. The intrapersonal domain of the associate teacher and teacher educator is equally important as the student teacher, as assessment decision making was shown to be significantly influenced by the personal expectations of the assessor.

The way in which the triad participants conceptualise their role, and the role of others, is a pivotal influence in the practicum. Teacher educators and associate teachers develop a professional identity that frames the way in which they contribute to the practicum (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Murray & Male, 2005), while in turn, student teachers have an identity as both student and future teacher to navigate (Caires, Almeida, & Vieira, 2012). Discord may arise when the conceptualisation of roles is not shared between participants, and expectations are not met (Allen, 2011). For example, some associate teachers in this study took a very proactive and direct role, while others identified that they liked to wait for the student to ask for help and guidance.

Intrapersonal factors guide the way in which each participant engages in the practicum relationships, as well as their expectations of how the other triad members should respond in those relationships. Personality plays a role - this may include the expression of warmth, humour, compassion, and personal sharing, as well as the level to which they provoke, challenge and confront. Conflict can arise when there is not a 'goodness of fit' in some of the

personal characteristics of the participants. For example, when a timid student is matched with an associate teacher who is seeking initiative and confidence, or when a student who likes to challenge and debate ideas is paired with an associate who values conformity. It is very difficult to address the influence of interpersonal factors, but the role of the teacher educator to support and mediate appears significant in mitigating some negative effects.

8.3.4. The model in practice – dynamic, multi-directional and transactional

One of the challenges of a two-dimension model is that it can appear to be static. To more effectively demonstrate the way in which the influences in each sphere impact and shape assessment of practicum, a three-dimensional model with multiple points of intersection would more accurately reflect the dynamic, transactional way in which the influences interact in a given case. The influences identified in each plane operate multi-directionally. They do not simply feed inwards towards the individual case, but also feed outwards, as individuals and practicum communities engage in advocacy and promote change in practicum and its assessment. At some points in time the interactions will be such that boundaries may shift, roles may be reconceptualised, practices critiqued and change may take place.

It is of note that at each level of influence there is the potential for participants to feel that they have agency or are disempowered. For example, the interviews with the key institutional informants suggests that while institutions have much power in determining practicum structures and assessment practices, they can see themselves as disempowered by circumstances in the socio-political realm. This tension was particularly evident in discussions of potential innovations in practicum assessment, where there was evidence of ideological and pedagogical support for change that could not readily be implemented because the financial constraints were seen to be too great. Similarly, associate teachers can feel empowered to contribute to assessment through the way the triadic meeting is facilitated, or can feel

disempowered when they disagree with the assessment outcome and consider that their feedback has not been taken seriously. The model must therefore be understood as reflecting a dynamic, transactional, mutually influencing process.

8.4. Assessment of practicum – challenges for future policy and practice

The findings of this study support the contention that the assessment of practicum is complex, problematic and at times flawed. While many rich and meaningful assessment experiences are reported, there are equally many indications of the struggles that participants face in the assessment process. While generally accepted that assessment is intended to be informative, supportive and transparent (Boud, 2009; Norsworthy, 2010), it is clear that such outcomes only emerge when contributing influences align positively, and this appears to happen more by chance than explicit design. This study contributes an early childhood perspective to other practicum research in New Zealand (Grudnoff, 2011; Haigh, 2005; Haigh & Ell, 2014; Haigh & Ward, 2004; Turnbull, 1999) in identifying the challenges of practicum, and acknowledging that the assessment of practicum is less than ideal for some participants. The following discussion highlights six key areas to emerge from the current study for consideration in future policy and practice for practicum assessment.

Findings revealed that the assessment of practicum is both highly institutionalised and highly individualised. Each institution had a clear framework and guidance in place to support the way in which the assessment of practicum was enacted. These institutional requirements were established in the accreditation of the programme, and communicated to participants in briefings, practicum documentation and assessment forms. It would be anticipated that such measures would support transparency and shared understanding between practicum participants. However, in contrast, the reports of participants and the evidence of the case studies reflect a highly individualised response to practicum assessment. As discussed

previously, each participant in the triad enters the assessment with their own beliefs, expectations and understandings of the process. Most of the challenges of practicum emerge when there is misalignment between the individuals as they engage in the assessment process. Future practices will need to address meaningful ways to support alignment and increased understanding between the participants. There is a need for much greater transparency in the assessment of practicum, in order to attenuate the challenges that result both from individual assessor influences and institutional constraints (Maclellan, 2004). It may be that the institutional guidelines serve to create an image of assessment that is more objective than it is in practice. Discussion that acknowledges how subjective the assessment process is, and supports greater understanding of and attention to both interpersonal and intrapersonal influences on assessment would appear to be of value.

It appears that the typical practice of having the teacher educator visit only once during the practicum fosters a divide in the summative and formative assessment responsibilities. This is further compounded by institutional requirements for quality assurance and gate keeping. Although this study offers illumination rather than answers, the findings call into question whether the current role division of associate teacher and teacher educator is effective. Although institutions espouse a partnership model, the relationships between the institutions and early childhood settings were not necessarily strong or effective, as other studies have found (Allen, 2011). Greater partnership between institutions and early childhood settings could support increased collaboration in the assessment, an outcome that would appear to be desired by the participants. The contribution of the knowledge of the teacher educator at more points of the practicum may serve to give students the opportunity to apply feedback throughout the practicum, rather than at the end. Likewise, greater involvement of the associate teacher in determining the outcome of the practicum may empower the associate teacher in their role, and foster a sense of shared learning between practicum participants.

One of the confronting outcomes of the study has been understanding the extent to which a negative assessment experience can have deep-seated and on-going repercussions for all participants involved. The outcome of practicum assessment is high-stakes for student teachers, determining their progress in the programme and opportunity to graduate. However, not only the outcome, but the assessment process itself is highly influential. Feedback from assessors can serve to affirm and encourage practice, or can be traumatic, and cause the student to challenge their place and future in the teaching profession. This was most starkly evidenced in the case study from Tahi where the student teacher spoke of the fear that she felt each assessment visit, as a result of unexpected negative feedback in her first practicum; an experience she considered traumatic. Similar stories were apparent in survey results as well. Findings indicate that teacher educators and associate teachers receive little training in relation to giving feedback within practicum assessment. The case studies revealed very different forms of feedback, each reflecting the personal approach of the individual assessor (Dayan, 2008; Heron 1990, in Randall & Thornton, 2001). Further training for all assessors, both associate teachers and teacher educators, in delivering effective verbal and written feedback would be of value. Student teachers could also be supported in skills related to receiving feedback, and accepting constructive advice.

While student teachers are potentially the most vulnerable of the practicum triad, the experience of practicum assessment can be very difficult for associate teachers and teacher educators as well, as they face conflict, disagreement, or poor practice. These findings suggest a greater role for debriefing for all participants. Some institutions noted that debriefing was available for students, but associate teachers and teacher educators would also benefit from opportunity to share their difficult experiences in a forum that would allow some resolution, clarity or support. Some of the associate teachers indicated that they had chosen to distance themselves from some institutions as a result of their experiences. The opportunity for

discussion with a representative of the institution may have been able to provide understanding or clarification that supported future partnership between the early childhood setting and the institution. Debriefing that allowed the opportunity for the emotional experience of practicum assessment to be considered may support participants to address feelings of fear, anger, uncertainty and anxiety. One of the most concerning findings was that so many of the student teachers felt unwilling and unable to seek support or redress when they had concerns about their practicum and the process and outcome of the assessment. Debriefing may provide a forum for increased openness and discussion of concerns; although students would have to be assured that the opportunity was meaningful and safe.

In looking to the future it seems important for institutions to consider the place of assessment in a political climate that requires increasing accountability. The current political climate suggests the possibility of a shift in accreditation, from the 'inputs' of an institution, such as content, facilities and faculty, to an emphasis on 'outputs' such as student learning and student change (Wentworth & Erickson, 2010). Recent events have seen the beginnings of the disestablishment of the New Zealand Teachers Council, while the nature of the replacement regulatory body has not been fully announced by Government, creating a time of limbo for teacher education. It appears important for institutions to have a strong assessment pedagogy and rationale for practice, and a response to calls for greater evidence of the outcomes of teacher education for both student teachers and the children they subsequently teach (Cochran-Smith, 2005, 2006). It is also possible that the future of teacher education will see the development of new programmes of study, potentially shorter in duration, with closer connections to schools and early childhood centres. Institutions will need to consider the place of assessment in alternative programmes to the three year undergraduate degree or diploma, and conceptualise what shifts are required in assessment to meet the needs of different models of teacher education.

The results of this study challenge initial teacher education providers to continue dialogue that addresses issues of reliability and validity in practicum assessment. While the importance of moderation is acknowledged by institutional informants and teacher educators, it appears that the moderation of practicum is very limited in practice, and relies extensively on collegial support. Even when teacher educators invited participants to take on a more collaborative and active role in practicum assessment, it was evident in the case studies and participant reports that the teacher educator wields the most power, and that assessment decision making rests on their professional judgements. Greater articulation and examination of the role of professional judgement, and the way in which teacher educators are inducted into and supported in their assessment role must be considered.

Future discussion must also confront the need for greater investment in the training and support of associate teachers, and potentially a re-conceptualisation of their role. The constraints that face institutions in selecting, training and retaining high quality associate teachers are very real. In particular, associate teachers typically receive a very modest payment for their role, and it would be very difficult in the current economic environment for institutions to find additional funds to support increased payments. However, it appears that to make genuine progress in practicum assessment will require the selection of expert or master teachers (Wilson, 2006), who are trained, supported and recompensed for their contribution to practicum and its assessment. Such associate teachers would have a greater understanding of the content of the ITE programme, and be skilled in mentoring and feedback.

There is a need for those involved in the assessment of practicum to pose questions such as “what do we tolerate?”, “what do we accept?”. The teacher educators and associate teachers presented an overall impression of genuine goodwill and good intentions, bound within an ever-present awareness of the constraints and limitations that shaped their practices. These

constraints at times were perceived by participants to be insurmountable, and thereby current practices and challenges were rationalised, with a view of making the best of the situation. For example, all participants wanted the student teachers to experience quality early childhood education settings, but all acknowledged that it was often a challenge to ensure settings were appropriate. More rigorous selection procedures were seen to be problematic, costly and unwieldy. Teacher educators and students rationalised this issue in suggesting that a student can learn a lot about “what not to do” in such settings, and this would foster the development of their professional philosophy. However, positive growth and reflection may well not be an automatic outcome, and the student teacher and teacher educator may be distressed by the experiences they observe in such practicum settings. There are practices and challenges in practicum assessment that are taken for granted in nature (Haigh & Ward, 2004) that will require innovation, courage and imagination to change in meaningful and sustainable ways.

8.5. Strengths and weakness of the present study

The decisions of the researcher in relation to research design, data collection and data analysis provide the context and parameters for a study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007), including constraints and limitations. This section identifies and acknowledges the strengths and limitations of the current study.

While the assessment of practicum was the focus of this study it became evident that it was difficult for participants to isolate the assessment of practicum from the overall practicum experience. Understanding the interconnectedness of assessment within the overall practicum experience proved to be a valuable insight, but posed a challenge in the analysis as there were points where it was unclear whether the respondents were directly referring to assessment or the practicum as a whole. Some data was then not able to be included in the analysis, or was acknowledged as being unclear.

The Phase One institutional interviews had a dual intent: to illuminate the assessment practices established by the institution, and to understand the institutional rationale for these practices. The key informant interviews yielded rich information as to the assessment practices and the perceived role of the institution, but less understanding of the reasons or rationale that supported the practices were identified. This may have been a result of not asking quite the right questions to elicit such information, or may reflect the knowledge of those who were nominated by the institution to be the key informant. Although each of the informants held a position of authority within the initial teacher education programme, with considerable knowledge and experience, not all of them had been involved in the programme development and decision making for the current offering. There was a sense that some of these informants had inherited an existing programme, or that the way in which practicum was assessed was historically determined. Those who had been directly involved in programme development expressed a deeper understanding of the 'why' alongside the 'how' of practicum assessment. Further research could seek a deeper understanding of the rationale for institutional choices in the delivery of practicum and its assessment. It would be of value to explore to what degree the assessment practices are shaped at an institutional level by ideological and theoretical understandings and how these principles are made visible within the institution and communicated to the teacher educators, associate teachers and student teachers.

The decision to include an online survey as Phase Two of the study was led by the desire to gain a breadth of responses from as many participants in the institutions as possible. Unfortunately, the final response rates were not as high as hoped for, particularly for associate teacher and teacher educators. However the responses received still yielded a rich and extensive data set, and given the alignment of responses across the three phases, it is anticipated that similar findings would have been elicited even with a greater response rate. A declining response rate to questions in the later part of the survey, suggests that survey may

have been too long and time-consuming. However Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2012) argue that although educational surveying yields low responses, the quality of the responses is typically high, making surveying still a valuable option in mixed methods research.

While the case studies yielded a wealth of data to support an understanding of the lived experience of practicum assessment, there were potentially missed opportunities to capture further information and understanding of the way in which the triadic relationships operated in the context of practicum assessment. At the very outset of the study, I positioned myself as an “outsider” researcher, intending to have as little presence in the research as possible (Kerstetter, 2012). From this position it was decided that data collection in the case study phase would be limited to recording the triadic meeting and interviewing the participants post assessment. However, from the first informant interview it became apparent that I was closer to the “insider” research position, as I had both knowledge and experience in this domain, and the experiences so closely resonated with my role as a teacher educator (Kerstetter, 2012). It would have been valuable to also have kept a researcher journal, in which I reflected on the assessment experience observed from the position of an experienced teacher educator. This reflective process took place informally, but these reflections were not kept systematically and therefore could not be used in the data analysis. For example, my own professional judgement of the student teacher did not in every case align with the feedback of the associate teacher and teacher educator. Had I been the teacher educator, in the context of my own institution, the assessment feedback and outcome that I would have given would have been different in some cases, which was quite confronting. My experiences affirmed the subjective nature of practicum assessment but could not be included in the analyses. I was concerned about positioning myself in such a way that the teacher educator in the triad would feel that I was critiquing or judging their practices, but in doing so, potentially limited some of the richness of practice that surrounded the actual triadic meeting.

Further documentation of the overall assessment visit, rather than just the triadic interview, would also have been valuable, as notes were not kept on the way in which the triad engaged with each other and others in the early childhood setting across the duration of the visit. The research design also did not include direct observation of the way in which associate teachers provided formative assessment feedback to the student teacher during the course of the practicum, relying on the self-reports provided by participants in the final interview. Although difficult to capture, analysis of such feedback would be a valuable focus for future research given that formative feedback plays a critical role in supporting the professional growth that is the desired outcome of practicum.

The data collected in the case study phase was immediate; recording the triadic, and then interviewing participants very soon thereafter. It would have been of interest to introduce the opportunity for participants to offer a later reflection on the triadic meeting, such as revisiting the transcript and offering comment after reading, rather than just reading the transcript and signing a release form for the data to be used. It would also be interesting to see if the perspective of participants changed after having the opportunity to engage with the triadic transcript as an artefact, rather than just sharing from their immediate memory of and feeling during the triadic meeting.

The case studies all represented scenarios where the practicum went well, with few issues. The relationships were generally positive, and the students were ultimately successful in meeting the required practicum outcomes. Although one student was required to submit additional written work, this was more in the form of extension work at the request of the teacher educator, as all criteria had been met. There were no cases where the student risked failing the practicum, or where there was overt or significant conflict between any of the members of the triad. In general, the case studies show the positive side of practicum assessment.

However the stories shared in other phases of the study, as well as references made by case study participants, indicate that assessment can be more problematic than the case studies would evidence. Future case study research that captured less positive situations would be of value, although challenging in terms of potential ethical issues.

The research yielded a very large amount of data across the three phases, necessitating decision making in relation to how much data to report, as well as the level of analysis conducted. The results and analysis presented in the thesis reflect a first level of topic or theme coding (Punch, 2009). There was potential for additional data-mining to further refine themes, identify connections and reflect on nuances in the data sets; however time constraints and the size of the thesis were limiting factors. For example, this thesis did not address differences that may have arisen due to the demographic characteristics of participants, or characteristics of the initial teacher education programme. It is anticipated that further analyses would yield even more insights and connections between different themes. In particular, the recordings of the triadic meeting are valuable artefacts that could be further explored through in-depth content analysis, to examine the way in which participants related to each other, the language and discourse that was evident (Wood & Kroger, 2000) and the use of voice and silence (Ortlipp, 2003).

My position as an informed yet non-participant researcher was both valuable and challenging. My role as a teacher educator, former student teacher and former associate teacher supported my conduct of the semi-structured interviews, and my responses to the dialogue as it unfolded. Shared understanding was valuable in the data collection and the data analysis (Kerstetter, 2012). However, some areas may have been left unexplored due to my tacit knowledge of the sector. I propose that some information was simply not shared because it was assumed knowledge, compounded by the fact that the participants knew my role, and

therefore believed I implicitly understood particular elements of the practicum and assessment process (Roland & Wickes, 2009). My own tacit understanding of the topic may also have not prompted me to ask more specific questions, or seek fuller explanations of particular elements. A researcher with a lens shaped by different experiences to my own may have elicited a different data set and drawn different conclusions from the subsequent analysis (Punch, 2009).

The findings of this study illuminate some of the challenges and experiences that exist in the shadows of practicum experiences. In undertaking an illuminative study, part of my intent was to bring the darker issues into the light, so that they could be made visible, and thereby granted greater attention within the teacher education sector. The anonymous online surveys provided the clearest glimpse of these issues – experiences that include conflict, bias, unprofessional practice and ethical concerns. Within the interviews there appeared to be reluctance to share some of the more challenging issues that arise, and the vulnerabilities that are possible in practicum assessment. Future research could attend further to these difficult issues in practicum. Other areas for future research are outlined in the following section.

8.6. Future research

As a current practicing teacher educator, I was the first to have my own practices illuminated by the findings of this research. As I heard, read, and was present in the shared moments of practicum assessment, I critiqued my own practices and considered whether the stories were similar to mine. Part of my rationale for this choice of research topic was to know if my experiences and the experiences of those who have participated with me in practicum assessment could be more fully reflected in the literature of the field. In many instances the stories shared were familiar and known to me. However, in my final evaluation I still do not feel that I have captured all that I had hoped. While the research presents a detailed picture of

assessment practices, to a certain extent I still feel that the picture of practicum assessment is incomplete. The threads of the key themes identified in this study will continue to be evidenced in the stories of practicum participants, but there are stories that remain untold, particularly the experiences that are less than desirable. Some of the complex cases that arise in practicum assessment are not reflected in this study, so further research that allows the voices of participants to be heard will be of value. This study served an exploratory and illuminatory purpose, highlighting areas of strength and challenge that could be reinvestigated in greater depth, or in different settings. Further research could consider if similar patterns in practicum assessment are evident in other sectors of initial teacher education. Some suggestions that warrant further attention in future research include the following:

- The form and function of the triadic assessment meeting – what purpose does it serve in comparison to meeting with the AT and the TE individually?
- Increased student teacher involvement in practicum assessment.
- Effective means to address disagreement in assessment outcomes.
- The weighting given to the personal vs professional characteristics in assessment decision-making.
- The conceptualisation, operationalisation and dissemination of assessment criteria.
- The way in which feedback is used to support professional growth, including examination of the type of feedback provided to student teachers by associate teachers throughout the practicum.
- The role of children and families in the practicum community – what influence do they have, and could they play a greater role?
- Effective ways of promoting shared understanding of assessment expectations and criteria between the triad members.
- The emotional experiences of student teachers, teacher educators and associate teachers as they address challenging assessment situations.

- The personal expectations of associate teachers and teacher educators and the role they play in assessment decision making.
- The place of assessment and assessment practices in shorter ITE courses, such as Graduate Diplomas of Teaching or Masters of Teaching and Learning.

8.7. Final thoughts: The complexity of practicum

This study began with a question – *how is the assessment of practicum enacted and experienced in early childhood initial teacher education?* The findings of this study have illuminated the practices of four representative institutions, and offered rich descriptions of student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator beliefs, perceptions and experiences. In reflecting on the key messages to be drawn from the study, the complexity of the practicum is the most confronting. The findings reveal each practicum to be shaped by multiple variables, many of which cannot be controlled by even the most well-considered and well-intentioned approaches to assessment. Responses to practicum assessment are challenging as they must attend to the institutional and regulatory context, the participants' core beliefs and identity, and the interpersonal relationships that are unique to each triad. The findings illuminate that while assessment is conducted within regulatory and institutional guidelines, associate teachers and teacher educators enact assessment in ways that intuitively feels right for each given situation. The assessment of practicum relies heavily on the professional judgments of the assessors which have been shown to be subjective, shaped by the beliefs, knowledge, experience and expectations of the individual. Expectations and outcomes for assessment are articulated in practicum documentation, but the way in which criteria are conceptualised, operationalised and utilised is at the discretion of the participant. There is little shared agreement or understanding on which to establish the foundation of assessment. It is for these reasons that practicum assessment is so often the focus of research, as those involved seek to find effective resolution for the challenges that are endemic to this complex phenomenon.

Looking forward, there are no easy or simplistic answers to the challenge of practicum assessment. Approaches that better select, prepare and support the participants, and openly attend to the subjectivity of practicum assessment are necessary. Greater collaboration and increased transparency are required to support the trustworthiness of assessment. However, meaningful and sustained change will require a significant investment of time, resources and finances, the areas so often cited as the biggest constraints. Interrogation of the way in which the roles of the triad are perceived is also necessary, to minimise the negative effects of hierarchal positioning of triad members, a difficult challenge when summative outcomes loom so large for student teachers. In shifting the traditional hierarchical view, the intent must not be to devalue the expertise and experience of teacher educators and associate teachers, but to assure student teachers of the value of their active contribution to assessment, and to confront their perception that they cannot or should not challenge their assessment.

As the New Zealand Teachers Council is disestablished in the near future, the replacement professional body will be tasked with reviewing initial teacher education, teaching standards and graduate expectations, with implications for practicum and the way it is assessed. It is imperative that those involved in practicum begin now to engage in discussion about the way in which practicum might be re-envisioned for the future, openly acknowledging both possibilities and challenges. It is hoped that the findings of the current study will contribute to this debate.

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Appendix Q:	Interview Topics for Phase Three Guided Interviews: Teacher Educator

Light and Shadow: Illuminating the assessment of practicum in initial teacher education

My name is Karyn Aspden and I am a doctoral student at Massey University. My previous roles as a student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator have led to my interest in the importance of practicum experience, and in particular the way in which practicum is assessed. Guided by the work of Barbara Rogoff (2003), my research seeks to understand the experience of practicum assessment from an individual, inter-personal and institutional perspective. The study will gather data from student teachers, associate teachers, teacher educators and institutional representatives to illuminate the experiences of these different participant groups and to identify factors that support authentic assessment of practicum.

I am seeking permission for your institution to be one of five teacher education providers to participate in this study. In working with five providers it is hoped that I will gain a representative sample of different approaches to practicum and practicum assessment, which in turn can be used to inform policy and practice across institutions. I need the support of institutions to access the key participant groups in an appropriate manner.

This research design incorporates three key phases. The institutional contribution that is sought for each phase is outlined below.

Phase One: Interview with key informant at each teacher education institution.

- Permission needed to interview the staff member with significant responsibility for the policy and practices related to practicum and practicum assessment.

Phase Two: Online survey for student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators involved in practicum assessment.

- Support and permission needed to access the population of student teachers in the appropriate teacher education programmes, as well as the related associate teachers and teacher educators in order to invite their participation in the online survey. For example, the opportunity to speak to potential participants, and/or for the institutions to recommend the appropriate distribution of an email inviting participants to complete the survey

Phase Three: Five case studies of practicum assessment in practice (one case study from each institution, including the student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator).

- Support and permission needed to identify a willing triad (including a typically progressing student in the third/final year of their programme) to participate in the case study.

All data gathered for this study will be kept in a secure manner, with no public access and only used for the purposes of the doctoral research and publications to arise from this. Every effort will be made to protect confidentiality and the anonymity of the institution and individual participants, with pseudonyms used throughout any documentation, and any identifying factors excluded. A summary of findings will be provided to each institution at the completion of the doctoral research.

Your institution has the right to withdraw support and permission to use any data collected until the end of the data collection, when data analysis commences. Note that participating staff, student teachers and associate teachers will all be asked to give individual consent for any information they provide.

Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any questions in relation to this research.

Karyn Aspden

PH: 021067705 or k.m.aspden@massey.ac.nz

Alternatively, you may contact either of my supervisors.

- Associate Professor Claire McLachlan
School of Arts. Development and Health Education, Massey University
Phone (09) 4140800 ext 8957 or c.j.mclachlan@massey.ac.nz
- Dr Kerry Bethell
School of Arts. Development and Health Education, Massey University
Phone (09) 4140800 ext 8856 or k.bethell@massey.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 10/51. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

Appendix B: Massey University Human Ethics Committee Consent



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

25 November 2010

FILE

Karyn Aspden
3 Buncrana Place
Albany
AUCKLAND

Dear Karyn

Re: HEC: Southern B Application – 10/51
Light and shadow: Illuminating the assessment of practicum in initial teacher education

Thank you for your letter dated 25 November 2010.

On behalf of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are now approved. Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair
Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B

cc A/Prof Claire McLachlan
School of Arts, Development
& Health Education
PN900

Dr Kerry Bethell
School of Arts, Development
& Health Education
PN900

Dr Karna Weir, HnS
School of Arts, Development
& Health Education
PN900

Mrs Roseanne MacGillivray
Graduate School of Education
PN900

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council

Te Kōwhiri
ki Pūwhiri

Research Ethics Office, Massey University, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand
T +64 6 350 1573 +64 6 350 5625 F +64 6 350 6222
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz animalethics@massey.ac.nz ipeds@massey.ac.nz
www.massey.ac.nz

Appendix C: Approval for Minor Amendments to MUHEC Consent



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

5 May 2011

Karyn Aspden
School of Arts, Development & Health Education
PN900

FILE

Dear Karyn

Re: HEC: Southern B Application – 10/51
Light and shadow: Illuminating the assessment of practicum in initial teacher education

Thank you for your letter dated 13 April 2011 outlining the changes you wish to make to the above application.

The changes to the proposed sites for data collection have been approved and noted.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee. If over time, more than one request to change the application is received, the Chair may request a new application.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair
Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B

cc A/Prof Claire McLachlan
School of Arts, Development
& Health Education
PN900

Dr Kerry Bethell
School of Arts, Development
& Health Education
PN900

Dr Kama Weir, HoS
School of Arts, Development
& Health Education
PN900

Mrs Roseanne MacGillivray
Graduate School of Education
PN900

Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
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Appendix D: Information Sheet – Phase One Key Informant

Light and Shadow: Illuminating the assessment of practicum in initial teacher education

My name is Karyn Aspden and I am a doctoral student at Massey University. My previous roles as a student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator have led to my interest in the importance of practicum experience, and in particular the way in which practicum is assessed. Guided by the work of Barbara Rogoff (2003), my research seeks to understand the experience of practicum assessment from an individual, inter-personal and institutional perspective. The study will gather data from student teachers, associate teachers, teacher educators and institutional representatives to illuminate the experiences of these different participant groups and to identify factors that support authentic assessment of practicum

This research is being conducted in three phases:

- Phase One:* Interview with key informant at each teacher education institution (five in total)
- Phase Two:* Online survey for student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators
- Phase Three:* Five case studies of practicum assessment in practice (one case study from each institution, including the student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator).

Your contribution to this study is invited as a key informant, as you have been identified as the person within your institution who is best able to provide information in relation to the policies and practices that guide the way in which practicum assessment is conducted. I invite you to participate in a face to face interview, which is expected to take up to one hour. An overview of potential questions will be provided prior to the interview, although discussion may include other information that you may feel is relevant. This interview will be conducted at a time and location that is convenient to you. To enable accurate recording of the interview an audio recording will be taken, that will later be transcribed. The transcribed data will be given to you for approval and emendation before being used in data analysis.

All data gathered for this study will be kept in a secure manner, confidential manner and only used for the purposes of the doctoral research and publications which arise from this. Confidentiality and anonymity of individual participants will be maintained, with pseudonyms used throughout any documentation, and any identifying factors excluded. A summary of findings will be provided to each institution at the completion of the Doctoral research.

Please note that you are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- withdraw from the study prior to data analysis;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher; and
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any questions in relation to this research.

Karyn Aspden

Ph: 0210677050 or k.m.aspden@massey.ac.nz

Alternatively, you may contact either of my supervisors.

- Associate Professor Claire McLachlan
School of Arts. Development and Health Education, Massey University

Phone (09) 4140800 ext 8957 or c.j.mclachlan@massey.ac.nz

- Dr Kerry Bethell
School of Arts. Development and Health Education, Massey University

Phone (09) 4140800 ext 8856 or k.bethell@massey.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 10/51. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix E: Information Sheet – Phase Two Survey Participants

Light and Shadow: Illuminating the assessment of practicum in initial teacher education

My name is Karyn Aspden and I am a doctoral student at Massey University. My previous roles as a student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator have led to my interest in the importance of practicum experience, and in particular the way in which practicum is assessed. Guided by the work of Barbara Rogoff (2003), my research seeks to understand the experience of practicum assessment from an individual, inter-personal and institutional perspective. The study will gather data from student teachers, associate teachers, teacher educators and institutional representatives to illuminate the experiences of these different participant groups and to identify factors that support authentic assessment of practicum.

This research is being conducted in three phases:

- Phase One:* Interview with key informant at each teacher education institution (five in total).
- Phase Two:* Online survey for student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators.
- Phase Three:* Five case studies of practicum assessment in practice (one case study from each institution, including the student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator).

I ask for your contribution to the online questionnaire component of this research (phase two) as I believe that it is very important to understand the different perspectives of student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators in relation to the assessment of practicum. I have chosen a survey to allow the opportunity to gather a breadth of data from a large number of participants to gain as full an understanding of their experiences of practicum assessment as possible.

Participation in this component of the research will involve completing an online questionnaire. It is expected that this questionnaire will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. This online survey is entirely anonymous, and you are not required to provide any identifying information in relation to yourself or the institution where you study.

All data gathered for this study will be kept in a secure, confidential place and only used for the purposes of the doctoral research and publications which arise from this. Confidentiality and anonymity of individual participants will be maintained, with pseudonyms used throughout any documentation, and any identifying factors excluded. A summary of findings will be provided to each institution at the completion of the doctoral research.

Please note that you are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, please be aware that completion and return of the questionnaire implies consent. You have the right to decline to answer any particular question. As the questionnaire is anonymous, it is not possible for individual responses to be withdrawn from the study once the questionnaire is submitted.

Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any questions in relation to this research.

Karyn Aspden

PH: 021067705 or k.m.aspden@massey.ac.nz

Alternatively, you may contact either of my supervisors.

- Associate Professor Claire McLachlan
School of Arts. Development and Health Education, Massey University
Phone (09) 4140800 ext 8957 or c.j.mclachlan@massey.ac.nz
- Dr Kerry Bethell
School of Arts. Development and Health Education, Massey University
Phone (09) 4140800 ext 8856 or k.bethell@massey.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 10/51. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix F: Information Sheet for Participants - Phase Three Case Studies

Light and Shadow: Illuminating the assessment of practicum in initial teacher education

My name is Karyn Aspden and I am a doctoral student at Massey University. My previous roles as a student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator have led to my interest in the importance of practicum experience, and in particular the way in which practicum is assessed. Guided by the work of Barbara Rogoff (2003), my research seeks to understand the experience of practicum assessment from an individual, inter-personal and institutional perspective. The study will gather data from student teachers, associate teachers, teacher educators and institutional representatives to illuminate the experiences of these different participant groups and to identify factors that support authentic assessment of practicum.

This research is being conducted in three phases:

- Phase One:* Interview with a key informant at each teacher education institution (five in total).
- Phase Two:* Online survey for student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators.
- Phase Three:* Five case studies of practicum assessment in practice (one case study from each institution, including the student teacher, associate teacher and teacher educator).

I invite your contribution to the case study component of the research (phase three) as I believe it is important to gain an understanding of the different perspectives of student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators. I have chosen to conduct case studies to allow the opportunity to gather in-depth data about the way that practicum is assessed in actual practice. The case study will involve the following components:

- Researcher observation of the practicum visit and assessment event (such as triadic meeting)
 - This will be conducted as discreetly as possible and will not affect the practicum or assessment process. This will be discussed and negotiated with each triad at the time.
- Post assessment interview with each of the key participants.
 - This will take approximately 30 minutes.
 - This will be a private interview between the individual participant and the researcher, and the location will be determined accordingly to allow open discussion of experiences
 - A list of general questions that will guide the interview will be provided prior to the assessment event.
 - The interview with the Student Teacher and Associate Teacher will take place in the centre immediately following the assessment, if appropriate. Otherwise, another time will be negotiated.
 - The interview with the Teacher Educator will take place at a negotiated time and location as soon after the assessment event as practicable.
- Analysis of documentation relating to the assessment of the practicum
 - Participants are asked to allow a photocopy to be taken of the written documentation related to the assessment. For example, written assessment

reports, written feedback, written work completed by the student teacher (for example a journal or written descriptions of the practicum.

To enable accurate recording of the interviews conducted an audio recording will be taken, that will later be transcribed. The transcribed data will be given to you for approval and review before being used in data analysis. You may provide further information or clarification at this time.

All data gathered for this study will be kept in a secure, confidential, locked space and will only used for the purposes of the Doctoral research and publications which arise from this. Confidentiality and anonymity of individual participants will be maintained, with pseudonyms used throughout any documentation, and any identifying factors excluded. A summary of findings will be provided to each institution at the completion of the Doctoral research.

Please note that you are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- decline to provide written documentation of your choice;
- withdraw from the study prior to data analysis;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher; and
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any questions in relation to this research.

Karyn Aspden

PH: 021067705 or k.m.aspden@massey.ac.nz

Alternatively, you may contact either of my supervisors.

- Associate Professor Claire McLachlan
School of Arts. Development and Health Education, Massey University

Phone (09) 4140800 ext 8957 or c.j.mclachlan@massey.ac.nz

- Dr Kerry Bethell
School of Arts. Development and Health Education, Massey University

Phone (09) 4140800 ext 8856 or k.bethell@massey.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 10/51. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix G: Consent Form: Key Informant – Phase One

Light and Shadow: Illuminating the assessment

of practicum in initial teacher education

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – INDIVIDUAL (KEY INFORMANT PHASE ONE)

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview(s) being sound recorded.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature:

Date:

.....

Full Name - printed

.....

Appendix H: Consent Form - Case Study Participant

Light and Shadow: Illuminating the assessment

of practicum in initial teacher education

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – INDIVIDUAL (CASE STUDY: STUDENT TEACHER, ASSOCIATE TEACHER, TEACHER EDUCATOR)

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview(s) being sound recorded.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature:

Date:

.....

Full Name - printed

.....

Appendix I: Guided Interview Topics for Key Informant Interviews

Guided Interview topics for Key Informant Interviews

Demographic data

Role:

Experience related to practicum:

Interview Topics – (this provides a guide only, in the context of a guided interview).

- **Assessment practices**

Please describe the general protocol of the institution in relation to assessment of practicum experiences (this may include both formative and summative assessment practices). Can you provide an explanation/rationale for why assessment is conducted in this way?

- **Assessment Philosophy**

Does the institution have a philosophy and/or conceptual framework that guides the way practicum should be assessed?

- **Assessment standards/criteria**

Does the institution have specific standards or criteria that a student teacher must meet on each practicum? Who is responsible for determining these standards? In what way are the assessment practices used shaped by influences outside of the institution? (e.g. The New Zealand Teachers Council requirements)

- **Assessment roles**

What is the role of the student teacher/ associate teacher/ teacher educator in the assessment process? Who is responsible for making the final decision as to the assessment outcome?

- **Strengths**

What do you see as the strengths of the assessment of practicum in this institution?

- **Challenges**

What do you see as the challenges involved in the assessment of practicum in this institution? Are there constraints that place limitations on the way in which practicum can be assessed?

- **Consistency/moderation**

How does this institution ensure consistency in assessment practices? Are assessment results for practicum moderated in any way?

- **Authenticity**

In what way does the institution consider the concept of authenticity/accuracy/truthfulness within assessment practices?

- **Failing students**

How does the institution respond to a student teacher who is not achieving to the expected standard on practicum? Can a student teacher fail practicum? On what grounds? How is this decision made?

- **Induction/PD/Support**

What induction/professional development/ongoing support is provided for the different participants involved in practicum assessment?

Appendix J: Authority for Release of Transcripts

Light and Shadow: Illuminating the assessment of practicum in initial teacher education

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature:

Date:

.....

Full Name - printed

.....

Appendix K: Student Teacher Survey

Assessment of Practicum - Survey for Students

Thanks you so much for choosing to complete the survey.

To clarify the terms used:

Institution - refers to the teacher education provider; the university or college providing the teacher training programme.

Teacher Educator - This refers to the person employed by the institution to assess the student on practicum. This could be a lecturer, or appointed appraiser.

Associate Teacher - refers to the person appointed within the early childhood centre to supervise and support the student teacher while on practicum.

1. Age:

☐

Under 20

☐

20-29

☐

30-39

☐

40-49

☐

50-59

☐

60+

2. Gender:

☐

Female

☐

Male

3. What teaching qualification are you currently studying towards?

4. What is your current stage of study?

☐

Year One

☐

Year Two

☐

Year Three

Other (please specify)

5. How many practicums have you completed?

☐

0

☐

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

Other (please specify)

6. Please list three words or short phrases that you would use to best describe your experience of being assessed while on practicum.

1

2

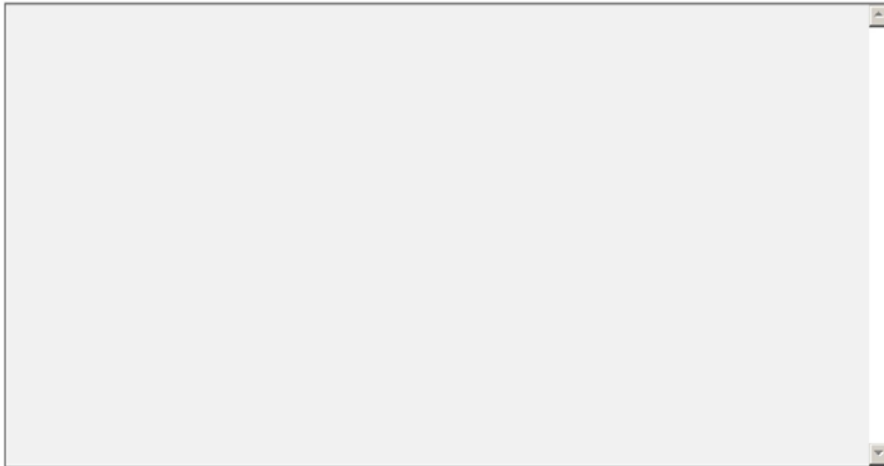
3

Assessment of Practicum - Survey for Students

7. Please rate how important the following reasons for assessing practicum are to you.

	Most important	Important	Less Important
To determine if I am ready to be a teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To give feedback so that I can grow as a teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To help me see my strengths as a future teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To help me see areas where I am not meeting expectations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To meet the requirements of the institution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Are there any other important reasons for assessing practicum?



Assessment of Practicum - Survey for Students

8. What have been some of the valuable outcomes of being assessed when on practicum? You may select as many answers as you wish.

- ☐ I received positive feedback about my strengths
- ☐ I received feedback that helped me see where I needed to develop further
- ☐ I was given feedback about my progress toward individual goals
- ☐ I changed some of my teaching practices
- ☐ My confidence increased
- ☐ Other (please specify)

9. Please describe a time when you felt that the assessment of your practicum was a positive experience. What made this so positive?

Assessment of Practicum - Survey for Students

10. The impact of relationships on the assessment of practicum:

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	A lot
Do you feel that the relationship you had with your associate teacher(s) impacted on the assessment of your practicum?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you feel that the relationship you had with your teacher educator(s) impacted on the assessment of your practicum?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you feel that the relationships that you had with other teachers in the centre impacted on the assessment of your practicum?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

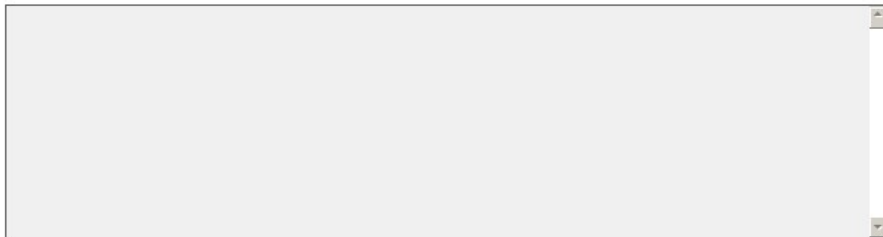
Please comment on the impact of these relationships, both positive and negative.

Assessment of Practicum - Survey for Students

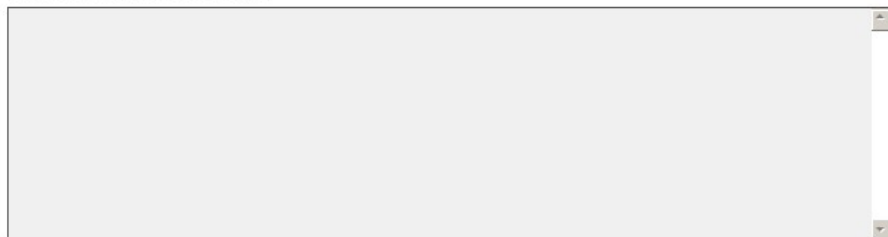
11. Which (if any) of the following challenges have you experienced when being assessed on practicum?

- ☐ A difficult relationship with my associate teacher which influenced the assessment
- ☐ A difficult relationship with the teacher educator which influenced my assessment
- ☐ A disagreement between the assessment of the associate teacher and the assessment of the teacher educator
- ☐ A disagreement between my own self-assessment and the assessment of the associate teacher and/or teacher educator
- ☐ An associate teacher who gave a negative assessment that I wasn't expecting
- ☐ Being unsure of the institution's expectation for me at each year level
- ☐ Being unsure of the centre's expectations of me
- ☐ Feeling that my contribution to the assessment process was not valued
- ☐ None of the above

Other (please specify)

A large, empty rectangular text area with a light gray background and a thin black border, intended for students to specify other challenges they have experienced.

12. Please describe a situation where you had concerns about the way that you were assessed on practicum.

A large, empty rectangular text area with a light gray background and a thin black border, intended for students to describe situations where they had concerns about the assessment process.

13. Have you ever felt unable to say what you wanted to say in the assessment (triadic) meeting?

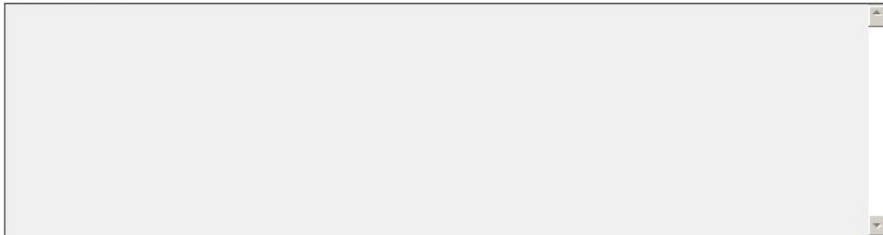
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Assessment of Practicum - Survey for Students

14. If you replied YES to the previous question (Q 13), please identify the reasons for this. (You can select as many as you wish)

- ☐ In order to maintain a positive relationship with the associate teacher
- ☐ In order to maintain a positive relationship with the teacher educator
- ☐ Because I was concerned about the reaction of the associate teacher
- ☐ Because I was concerned about the reaction of the teacher educator
- ☐ Because of time constraints
- ☐ Because I was concerned about how I might be perceived
- ☐ Because I felt that my contribution was not valued/respected
- ☐ Other

Please comment



15. Do you believe that there is potential for bias to influence the assessment of practicum?

- ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

16. Have you experienced bias in the assessment of your practicum?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Assessment of Practicum - Survey for Students

17. If you answered yes to the previous question (Q 16), please tick which of the following factors you believe were the cause of the bias.

- ☐ Language factors
- ☐ Cultural or ethnic factors
- ☐ Gender
- ☐ Sexuality
- ☐ Other personal characteristics
- ☐ Physical characteristics
- ☐ Personality clash

Other (please specify)

18. I believe that bias can be minimised by... (please comment)

Assessment of Practicum – Survey for Students

19. Please rate the importance of each of the following factors in contributing to the assessment of your practicum

	Most important	Important	Less important	Not considered
Observation of my practice by the teacher educator	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback from the associate teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback from the other teachers in the centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback from the children in the centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Documentation that I provide	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completion of required assessment task(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My self assessment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My portfolio	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any comment you wish to make?

20. Do you believe that the assessment of practicum should be guided by (please select one)

- ☐ Pre-set criteria
- ☐ Individual student goals

21. Who do you believe should make the final assessment decision about a student's grade at the end of practicum?

- ☐ The coordinator of the practicum course
- ☐ The New Zealand Teachers Council
- ☐ The teacher educator who visits you
- ☐ The associate teacher
- ☐ Mutually agreed decision by the teacher educator, associate teacher and student teacher

Other (please specify)

Assessment of Practicum - Survey for Students

22. Have you ever disagreed with the assessment of your practicum?

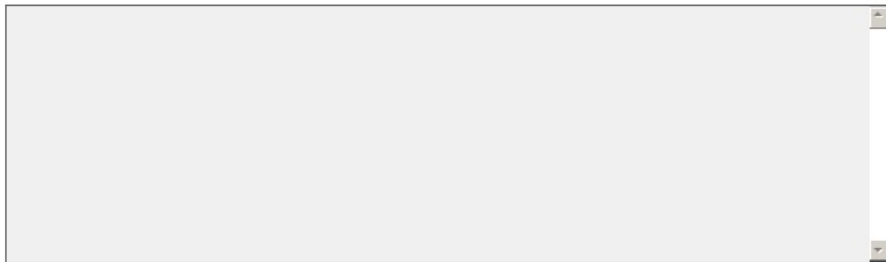
- ☐ Yes
☐ No

**23. If you answered YES to the previous question (Q22) what action did you take?
Please explain.**

A large, empty rectangular text input area with a light gray background and a thin black border. It has a vertical scrollbar on the right side.

24. If you answered NO to question 22 please respond to the following statement

"If I were to disagree with the assessment of my practicum I would"

A large, empty rectangular text input area with a light gray background and a thin black border. It has a vertical scrollbar on the right side.

25. Have you been in a situation where you were not meeting the expectations for a practicum?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Assessment of Practicum - Survey for Students

26. If YES, what strategies were used in this situation?

- ☐ The teacher educator came for additional visits
- ☐ I was given additional time to meet expectations
- ☐ I was supported to set goals and strategies to meet expectations
- ☐ I was awarded a failing grade for practicum
- ☐ I was required to repeat a practicum
- ☐ I was required to spend longer in an early childhood setting

Other (please specify)

27. How did this experience affect you as a student teacher?

28. Have you been required to complete a self-assessment when on practicum?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

29. How would you describe this self-assessment experience? (Please choose one answer from each column which best describes your experience).

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Challenging | <input type="checkbox"/> Simple |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Valuable | <input type="checkbox"/> Waste of time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was too hard on myself | <input type="checkbox"/> I was too easy on myself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I felt well prepared | <input type="checkbox"/> I was not prepared |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It helped to improve my practice | <input type="checkbox"/> It did not improve my practice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I felt confident in my appraisal | <input type="checkbox"/> I was not confident in my appraisal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I liked being able to contribute to the assessment | <input type="checkbox"/> I did not like being able to contribute to the assessment |

Assessment of Practicum - Survey for Students

30. Do you believe that the assessment of a student teacher should include a self-appraisal from the student?

☐ Yes

☐ No

31. What form do you think this self-appraisal should take? (You may select more than one answer)

☐ Written reflections

☐ Verbal discussion

☐ Checklist of criteria

☐ Developing a portfolio

Other (please specify)

32. Do you feel that the assessment of your practicum experiences have given an accurate picture of you as a teacher?

☐ Always

☐ Most of the time

☐ Some of the time

☐ Never

☐ Unsure

33. Are there other assessment practices that you think could be used to give a more accurate picture of you as a teacher?

Assessment of Practicum - Survey for Students

34. Preparation for the assessment of practicum

	Yes	No	Unsure
Did you receive preparation for the assessment that would occur on practicum?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Did you know what to expect when the teacher educator came to visit?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Did you understand the criteria that was going to be used for the assessment?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Would you have liked further preparation for the assessment of practicum?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you answered yes, what further preparation would you have found valuable?

35. Do you have any further comments you would like to make in relation to the assessment of practicum?

Thank you so much for your contribution to this study. Your time and the perspective that you share are very much appreciated. If you would like to contact me directly you may do so at k.m.aspden@massey.ac.nz.

Regards,

Karyn

Appendix L: Associate Teacher Survey

Survey for Associate Teachers - 18/10/11

Thanks you so much for choosing to complete the survey.

To clarify the terms used:

Institution - refers to the teacher education provider; the university or college providing the teacher training programme.

Teacher Educator - This refers to the person employed by the institution to assess the student on practicum. This could be a lecturer, or appointed appraiser.

Associate Teacher - refers to the person appointed within the early childhood centre to supervise and support the student teacher while on practicum.

Age:

- ☐ 20-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ 60+

Gender

- ☐ Female
☐ Male

Years of experience as an early childhood teacher:

- ☐ < 1 year
☐ 1-5 years
☐ 6-10 years
☐ 11-20 years
☐ 20+ years

How much experience have you had in assessing student teachers on practicum?

- ☐ 1 Little experience ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Some experience ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Extensive experience

How confident do you feel in assessing student teachers on practicum?

- ☐ 1 Not confident ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Confident ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Very confident

Survey for Associate Teachers - 18/10/11

What factors influence your level of confidence in assessing students teachers on practicum? (You may select more than one answer).

- ☐ Associate teacher training received from teacher education institutions
- ☐ Length of experience as an early childhood teacher
- ☐ Length of experience as associate teacher
- ☐ Ongoing professional development/ professional learning
- ☐ Mentoring
- ☐ Observation of more experienced colleagues
- ☐ Clear criteria to guide the assessment process

Other (please specify)

How do you view your primary role in the assessment of practicum?

- ☐ Assessing the student against the institutions required standards to determine if they are meeting expectations
- ☐ Assessing the student teacher achievement of goals to provide individual feedback, support and guidance for professional growth

Comments?

Have you ever felt a conflict between the two roles identified above?

Please write three words (or short phrases) that best describe your experience of assessing student teachers on practicum.

1	<input type="text"/>
2	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>

Survey for Associate Teachers - 18/10/11

Please rate the importance you place on the following reasons for assessing student teachers on practicum

	Most important	Important	Less important
To determine if the student teacher is ready to be a teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To give feedback so that the student can grow as a teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To show students their strengths as future teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To show students where they are not meeting expectations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To ensure the student is meeting the requirements of the institution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To fail students who are not succeeding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How would you describe a successful assessment of practicum?

Survey for Associate Teachers - 18/10/11

Which of the following challenges have you experienced when assessing a student teacher on practicum? (You may select multiple options).

- ☐ A difficult relationship with the student which influenced the assessment
- ☐ A difficult relationship with the teacher educator which influenced the assessment
- ☐ A disagreement between your assessment of a student and the teacher educator's assessment
- ☐ Feeling unsure about whether a student is meeting the expectations for their level of study
- ☐ A student teacher who does not agree with the feedback given or assessment decision
- ☐ Feeling that your contribution to the assessment was not valued

Other (please specify)

Please describe a situation(s) where you had concerns about the way a practicum was assessed.

Do you ever feel that you are not able to say what you want to say in an assessment (triadic) meeting?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Survey for Associate Teachers - 18/10/11

If so, please identify the reasons for this (you may select multiple answers)

- ☐ In order to maintain a positive relationship with the student
- ☐ In order to maintain a positive relationship with the teacher educator
- ☐ Because I was concerned about the reaction of the student
- ☐ Because I was concerned about the reaction of the teacher educator
- ☐ Because I wanted to focus on positive outcomes
- ☐ Because of time constraints
- ☐ Because I found it difficult to give negative feedback to a student
- ☐ Because I was concerned about how I might be perceived
- ☐ Because I felt that my contribution was not respected/valued

Other (please specify)

Do you believe that there is potential for bias to influence the assessment of practicum?

- ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

Have you experienced bias in the assessment of practicum?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

I believe that this bias was a result of...

- ☐ Cultural or ethnic factors
- ☐ Gender
- ☐ Sexuality
- ☐ Other personal characteristics
- ☐ Physical characteristics
- ☐ Personality clash
- ☐ Language factors

Other (please specify)

Survey for Associate Teachers - 18/10/11

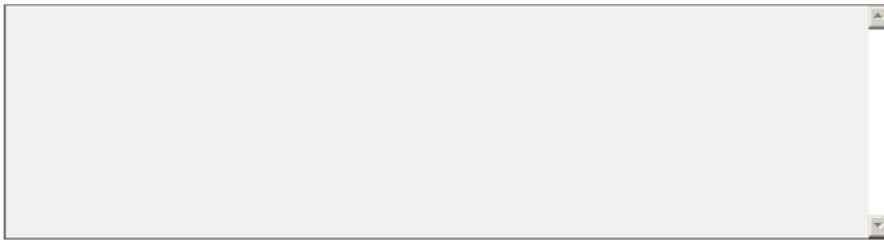
I believe that bias can be minimised by....

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How do you ensure that your assessment of individual students is fair?

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How do you ensure that you are consistent in your assessment of different students?

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Survey for Associate Teachers - 18/10/11

Please rate the importance of the following factors in contributing to your assessment decision making.

	Most important	Important	Less important	Not considered
Own observation of the student in practice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback from other teachers in the centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback from children in the centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Documentation provided by the student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completion of required assessment task(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student self-assessment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional intuition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Portfolios	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please comment on your confidence in the following areas

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel confident in contributing to assessment decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident in interpreting the assessment criteria	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sometimes I have doubts about my assessment feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My skills in assessing students have improved with experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel well prepared to contribute to the assessment of student teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident in contributing to the assessment meeting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident in my ability to give verbal feedback to students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident in my ability to give written feedback to students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Survey for Associate Teachers - 18/10/11

Do you believe that the assessment of practicum should be guided by (please select one)

- ☐ Pre-determined criteria or standards (e.g. global learning outcomes) OR
- ☐ Individual student goals

Who do you believe should be responsible for defining the criteria and standards for practicum?

- ☐ The teacher education institution
- ☐ The teacher education institution in consultation with associate teachers
- ☐ The teacher education institution with input from students
- ☐ The teacher education institution in collaboration with other stakeholders
- ☐ New Zealand Teachers Council

Other (please specify)

Do you have a method of assessment that you use with all students? Please can you describe this.

Do your assessment methods change according to the institution the student is from? Please describe.

Survey for Associate Teachers - 18/10/11

Do you believe that the assessment practices that you use give an accurate (authentic) picture of the student as a future teacher?

- ☐ All of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ Never ☐ Unsure

Other (please specify)

Do you believe that there are other practices that could be used to increase the accuracy (authenticity) of the assessment?

Bannink (2009, p.245) argues that "Assessment in teacher education should not only be linked to performance here and now, but also focus on growth and even potential for growth". Do you....

- ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

Please feel free to comment if you wish

Do you believe that your current practices support this type of assessment in relation to practicum?

- ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

Survey for Associate Teachers - 18/10/11

Please rate your perceptions about your preparation for the assessment of practicum on the following scale.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I have received extensive training in preparation for assessment of practicum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have found this training to be effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have participated in ongoing professional learning/development related to practicum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have found this professional learning/development to be effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Would you like further professional learning or support in the area of the assessment of practicum?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, what would you like this support to include?

Please rate your response to the following statements related to assessment processes.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I believe that the assessment of practicum should be collaborative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that the student teacher should offer self assessment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that it is important to have multiple perspectives in making practicum assessment decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that the triadic assessment meeting is an effective tool.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Survey for Associate Teachers - 18/10/11

In your experience, who typically holds the most power in making the final assessment decision for a practicum?

- ☐ The associate teacher
- ☐ The teacher educator
- ☐ The student
- ☐ The teaching institution (eg. practicum coordinator)
- ☐ Power is equally distributed between the participants
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Who do you believe SHOULD hold the most power in this assessment decision?

- ☐ The associate teacher
- ☐ The teacher educator
- ☐ The student
- ☐ The institution
- ☐ Power is equally distributed between the participants
- ☐ Other (please specify)

What are the challenges to working collaboratively with the teacher educator and student to assess practicum? You may select more than one option.

- ☐ Lack of shared understanding of criteria
- ☐ Relationship challenges between the participants
- ☐ Time constraints
- ☐ Lack of commitment
- ☐ Confidence of participants
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Survey for Associate Teachers - 18/10/11

As an associate teacher, have you ever disagreed with an institution's final assessment decision regarding a student on practicum.

☐ Yes

☐ No

If YES, what steps did you take as a result?

If NO, should such a situation arise, what would you do?

Have you been an AT for a student who was not meeting expectations for the practicum?

☐ Yes

☐ No

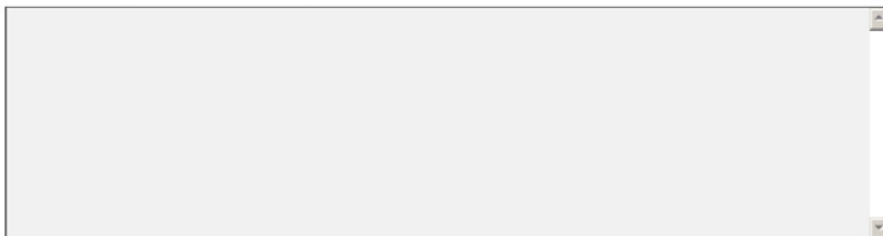
If YES, What strategies were used in this situation?

- ☐ The institution conducted additional visits to the student
- ☐ The student was given additional time to meet expectations
- ☐ The student was supported to set goals and strategies to meet expectations
- ☐ the student was awarded a failing grade for practicum
- ☐ The student was required to repeat a practicum
- ☐ The student was required to spend longer in the early childhood centre

Other (please specify)

Survey for Associate Teachers - 18/10/11

How did the experience of supporting a student who was not meeting expectations affect you as an associate teacher?

A large, empty rectangular text area with a light gray background and a thin black border, intended for the respondent to provide a written answer to the question above.

Is your experience of the way practicum is assessed by the institutions you have been an associate teacher for, in agreement with your own professional philosophy regarding assessment practice?

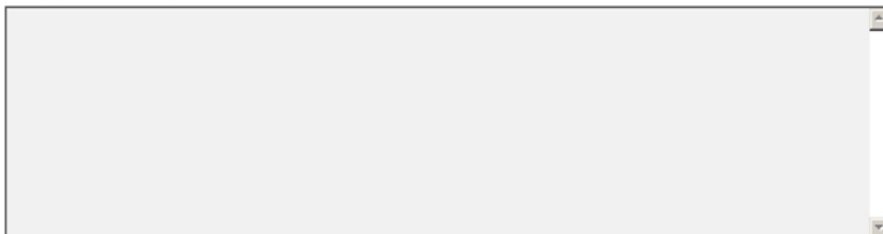
☐ Yes

☐ No

Please comment

A large, empty rectangular text area with a light gray background and a thin black border, intended for the respondent to provide a written comment if they selected 'No'.

Do you have any further comments that you would like to make in relation to the assessment of practicum?

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Survey for Associate Teachers - 18/10/11

Thank you so much for your contribution this study. Your time, and the perspective that you offer, are very much appreciated. If you wish to contact me you may do so at k.m.aspden@massey.ac.nz.

Kind regards
Karyn

Appendix M: Teacher Educator Survey

Survey for teacher educators - 18/10/11

Thanks you so much for choosing to complete the survey.

To clarify the terms used:

Institution - refers to the teacher education provider; the university or college providing the teacher training programme.

Teacher Educator - This refers to the person employed by the institution to assess the student on practicum. This could be a lecturer, or appointed appraiser.

Associate Teacher - refers to the person appointed within the early childhood centre to supervise and support the student teacher while on practicum.

Age:

- ☐ 20-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ 60+

Gender

- ☐ Female
☐ Male

What is your role?

- ☐ Practicum coordinator
☐ Programme Leader
☐ Lecturer/Teacher Educator
☐ Contract practicum appraiser

Other (please specify)

How much experience have you had in assessing student teachers on practicum?

- ☐ 1 Little experience ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Some experience ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Extensive experience

How confident do you feel in assessing student teachers on practicum?

- ☐ 1 Not confident ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Confident ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Very confident

Survey for teacher educators - 18/10/11

What factors influence your level of confidence in assessing students teachers on practicum? (You may select more than one answer).

- ☐ Induction to the role
- ☐ Ongoing professional development/ professional learning
- ☐ Length of experience in teacher education
- ☐ Previous teaching experience in the early childhood sector
- ☐ Mentoring
- ☐ Observation of more experienced colleagues
- ☐ Clear criteria to guide the assessment process

Other (please specify)

How do you view your primary role in the assessment of practicum?

- ☐ Assessing the student against the required standards in order to determine suitability to graduate as a teacher
- ☐ Assessing the student teacher to provide feedback, support and guidance for professional growth

Comments?

Have you ever felt a conflict between the two roles identified above?

Please write three words (or short phrases) that best describe your experience of assessing student teachers on practicum.

1	<input type="text"/>
2	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>

Survey for teacher educators - 18/10/11

Please rate the importance you place on the following reasons for assessing student teachers on practicum

	Most important	Important	Less important
To determine if the student teacher is ready to be a teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To give feedback so that the student can grow as a teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To show students their strengths as future teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To show students where they are not meeting expectations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To ensure the student is meeting the requirements of the institution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To fail students who are not succeeding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How would you describe a successful assessment of practicum?

Survey for teacher educators - 18/10/11

Which of the following challenges have you experienced when assessing a student teacher on practicum? (You may select multiple options).

- ☐ A difficult relationship between the associate teacher and the student which influenced the assessment
- ☐ A difficult relationship between yourself and the student which influenced the assessment
- ☐ A difficult relationship between yourself and the associate teacher which influenced the assessment
- ☐ An associate teacher providing inaccurate or inappropriate assessment feedback regarding a student
- ☐ A disagreement between your assessment of a student and the associate teachers assessment
- ☐ Feeling institutional pressure to award an assessment outcome that you disagreed with
- ☐ Feelin unsure about whether a student is meeting the expectations for their level of study
- ☐ A student teacher who does not agree with the feedback given or assessment decision
- ☐ Feeling that your contribution to the assessment was not valued

Other (please specify)

Please describe a situation(s) where you had concerns about the way a practicum was assessed.

Do you ever feel that you are not able to say what you want to say in an assessment (triadic) meeting?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Survey for teacher educators - 18/10/11

If so, please identify the reasons for this (you may select multiple answers)

- ☐ In order to maintain a positive relationship with the student
- ☐ To maintain a positive relationship with the early childhood setting
- ☐ Because I was concerned about the reaction of the student
- ☐ Because I was concerned about the reaction of the associate teacher
- ☐ Because I wanted to focus on positive outcomes
- ☐ Because of time constraints
- ☐ Because I found it difficult to give negative feedback to a student
- ☐ Because I felt that my contribution was not valued/respected

Other (please specify)

Do you believe that there is potential for bias to influence the assessment of practicum?

- ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

Have you experienced bias in the assessment of practicum?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

I believe that this bias was a result of...

- ☐ Cultural or ethnic factors
- ☐ Gender
- ☐ Sexuality
- ☐ Other personal characteristics
- ☐ Physical characteristics
- ☐ Personality clash
- ☐ Language factors

Other (please specify)

Survey for teacher educators - 18/10/11

I believe that bias can be minimised by....

Please rate the importance of the following factors in contributing to your assessment decision making.

	Most important	Important	Less important	Not considered
Own observation of the student in practice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback from the associate teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback from other staff in the centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback from children in the centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Documentation provided by the student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completion of required assessment task(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student self-assessment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional intuition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Portfolios	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Survey for teacher educators - 18/10/11

Please comment on your confidence in the following areas

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel confident in reaching assessment decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident in interpreting the assessment criteria	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sometimes I have doubts about my assessment decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My skills in assessing students have improved with experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel well prepared to assess student teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident in facilitating the assessment (triadic)meeting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident in my ability to communicate with students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident in my ability to communicate with associate teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you believe that the assessment of practicum should be guided by (please select one)

- ☐ Pre-determined criteria or standards (e.g. global learning outcomes) OR
- ☐ Individual student goals

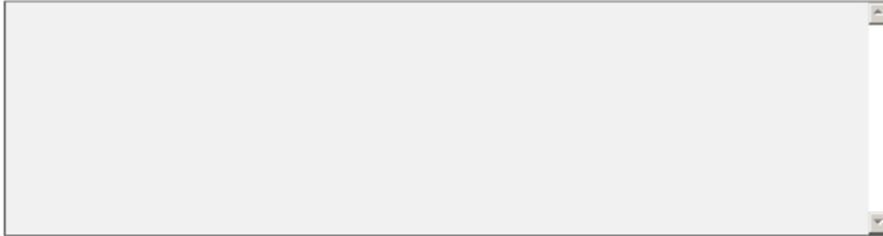
Who do you believe should be responsible for defining the criteria and standards for practicum?

- ☐ The teacher education institution
- ☐ The teacher education institution in consultation with associate teachers
- ☐ The teacher education institution with input from students
- ☐ The teacher education institution in collaboration with other stakeholders
- ☐ New Zealand Teachers Council

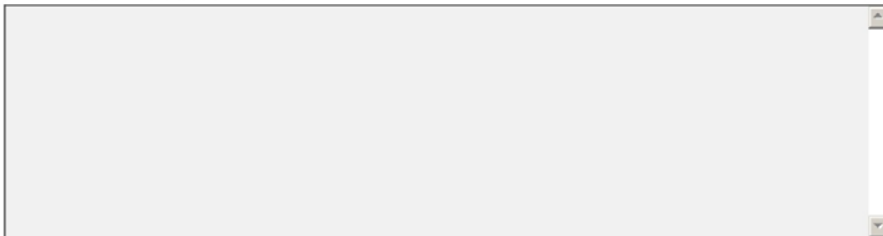
Other (please specify)

Survey for teacher educators - 18/10/11

Do you have a method of assessment that you use with all students? Please can you describe this.



Do your assessment practices change at times as a result of circumstances within the practicum? Please describe.



Do you believe that the assessment practices that you use give an accurate (authentic) picture of the student as a future teacher?

☐

All of the time

☐

Some of the time

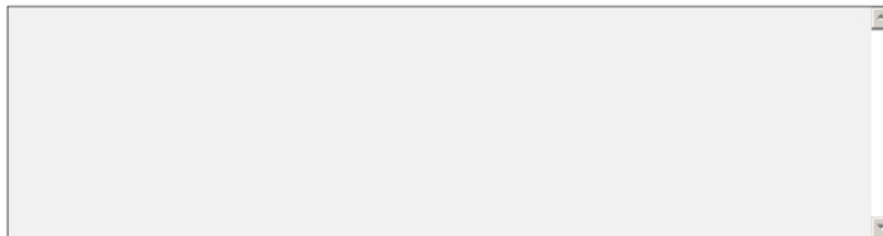
☐

Never

☐

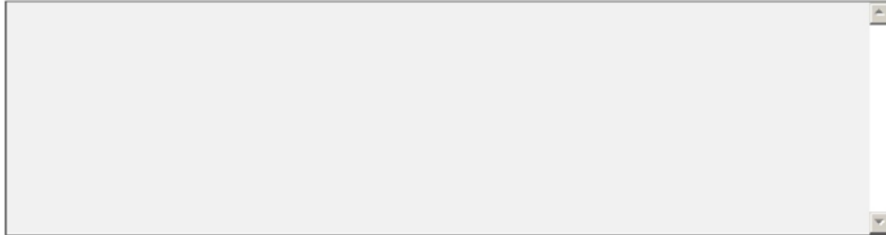
Unsure

Other (please specify)



Survey for teacher educators - 18/10/11

Do you believe that there are other practices that could be used to increase the accuracy (authenticity) of the assessment?



Bannink (2009, p.245) argues that "Assessment in teacher education should not only be linked to performance here and now, but also focus on growth and even potential for growth". Do you....

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

Please feel free to comment if you wish



Do you believe that your current practices support this type of assessment in relation to practicum?

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Unsure ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

Please rate your perceptions about professional preparation on the following scale.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I have received extensive induction support in preparation for the assessment of practicum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have participated in ongoing professional learning/development relating to practicum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Survey for teacher educators - 18/10/11

Would you like further professional learning or support in the area of the assessment of practicum?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, what would you like this support to include?

Do you engage in moderation of your practicum assessment?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Any comment?

Have you ever been observed and given feedback on your assessment practice?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Any comment?

How do you ensure that your assessment of individual students is fair?

Survey for teacher educators - 18/10/11

How do you ensure that you are consistent in your assessment of different students?

Please rate your response to the following statements related to assessment processes.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I believe that the assessment of practicum should be collaborative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that the student teacher should offer self assessment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that it is important to have multiple perspectives in making practicum assessment decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that the triadic assessment meeting is an effective tool.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Who do you believe holds the most power in making the final assessment decision for a practicum?

- ☐ The associate teacher
- ☐ The teacher educator
- ☐ The student
- ☐ The teaching institution (eg. practicum coordinator)
- ☐ Power is equally distributed between the participants
- ☐ Other (please specify)

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Who do you believe SHOULD hold the most power in this assessment decision?

- ☐ The associate teacher
- ☐ The teacher educator
- ☐ The student
- ☐ The institution
- ☐ Power is equally distributed between the participants
- ☐ Other (please specify)

What are the challenges to working collaboratively with the associate teacher and student to assess practicum? You may select more than one option.

- ☐ Lack of shared understanding of criteria
- ☐ Relationship challenges between the participants
- ☐ Time
- ☐ Institutional constraints
- ☐ Lack of commitment
- ☐ Confidence of participants
- ☐ Other (please specify)

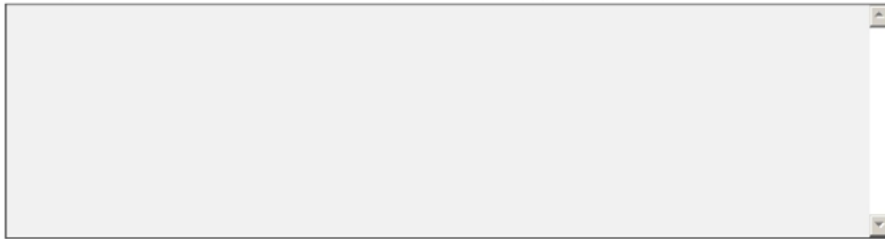
Have you experienced a situation where there was disagreement over the final assessment decision for a practicum?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If YES, what steps did you take as a result?

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If NO, should such a situation arise, what would you do?

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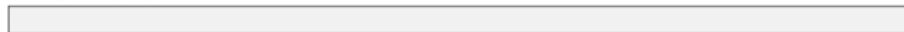
Have you assessed a student who was not meeting expectations for the practicum?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

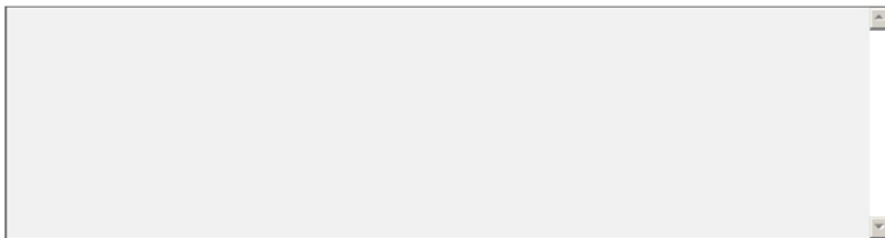
What strategies have you used in this situation?

- ☐ I have conducted additional visits to the student
☐ I have given the student additional time to meet expectations
☐ I have assisted the student to set goals and strategies to meet expectations
☐ I have awarded a student a failing grade for practicum
☐ I have recommended that a student repeat a practicum
☐ I have counselled students regarding their suitability for teaching

Other (please specify)

A horizontal rectangular text area with a light gray background and a thin border, intended for specifying other strategies.

How does the experience of supporting a student who is not succeeding affect you as a teacher educator?

A large, empty rectangular text area with a light gray background and a thin border, intended for a written response.

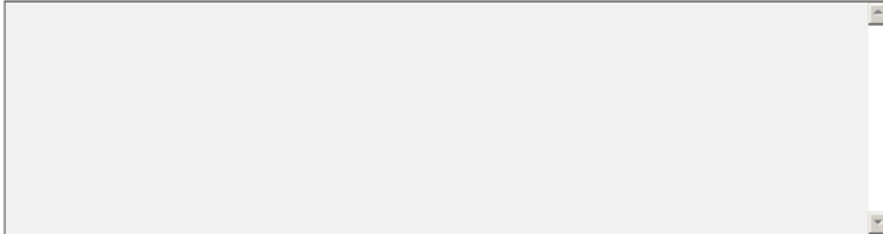
Survey for teacher educators - 18/10/11

Is your experience of practicum assessment in your current role, in agreement with your own professional philosophy regarding assessment practice?

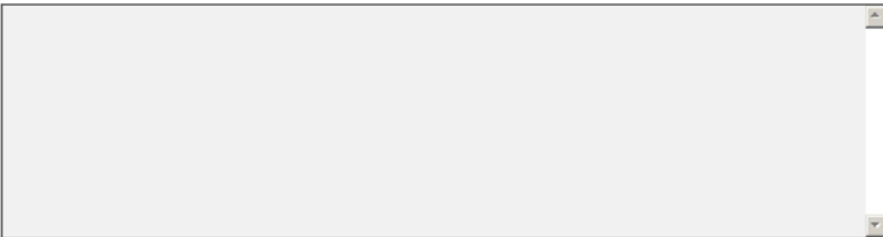
☐ Yes

☐ No

Please comment



Do you have any further comments that you would like to make in relation to the assessment of practicum?



Thank you so much for your contribution this study. Your time, and the perspective that you offer, are very much appreciated. If you wish to contact me you may do so at k.m.aspden@massey.ac.nz.

Kind regards
Karyn

Appendix N: Email Invitation to Survey Participants

Have you ever found the assessment of practicum to be challenging?

Why is it so important?

I am very interested in hearing about the perspective and stories of those in the early childhood sector who are involved in the assessment of practicum – students, associate teachers and teacher educators.

My name is Karyn Aspden and I am a doctoral student and lecturer at Massey University College of Education. This doctoral study is focusing on examining the realities of practicum assessment: the good, the bad, and the parts we might not talk about very often. It is hoped that this study will help to guide and inform the way that teacher education programmes assess practicum in the future.

I am asking you to give approximately 20 minutes of your time to contribute to my study, in an online questionnaire about your experiences in the assessment of practicum. I would very much appreciate your contribution in order to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives and experiences of student teachers, associate teachers and teacher educators.

Please find attached an information sheet which outlines the nature of this research, as well as your rights as a participant.

If you wish to complete the survey, please CONTROL+CLICK on the following link []

Please be aware that once you have submitted the survey, you cannot go back into the survey.

Please could you complete the survey by November 14th 2011.

Many thanks for your contribution.

Kind regards

Karyn Aspden

Appendix O: Interview Topics for Phase Three Guided Interviews -

Associate Teacher

Interview Topics for associate teachers

Please note: This is a guided interview. The following topics are to guide and prompt the discussion only. You are free to share any other relevant information that you wish. Discussion is able to relate to the assessment visit today, as well as any other assessment processes during the practicum itself.

Potential topics for discussion;

- Background information, eg, previous contact between the participants
- Description of your role in the assessment process
- Expectations before the visit
- Factors considered when assessing the student
- Assessment decision making
- Use of criteria/indicators
- Assessment philosophy (in relation to practicum)
- The significance of the AT's previous experience and/or intuition
- Authenticity of the assessment of the student
- Strengths of the practicum assessment process
- Challenges in the practicum assessment process
- The significance of relationships in the assessment process
- Personal reflection on the practicum assessment experience

Appendix P: Interview Topics for Phase Three Guided Interviews -

Student Teacher

Interview Topics for Student Teacher

Please note: This is a guided interview. The following topics are to guide and prompt the discussion only. You are free to share any other relevant information that you wish. Discussion is able to relate to the assessment visit today, as well as any other assessment processes during the practicum.

- Background information
- Expectations before the visit – did it go as expected?
- Description of the assessment process
- The role of the student, AT, and visiting lecturer in the assessment process
- How assessment decisions were made – student perspective
- Self-assessment/self-appraisal
- Feelings during the assessment process
- Authenticity of the assessment process
- Positive outcomes of the assessment process
- Any challenges during the assessment process
- The significance of relationships in the assessment process
- Personal reflection on the assessment process

Appendix Q: Interview Topics for Phase Three Guided Interviews -

Teacher Educator

Interview Topics for Teacher Educator

Please note: This is a guided interview. The following topics are to guide and prompt the discussion only. You are free to share any other relevant information that you wish. Discussion is able to relate to the assessment visit today, as well as any other assessment processes during the practicum.

- Background information, eg, previous contact between the participants
- Description of your role in the assessment process – the role of the student, AT
- Expectations before the visit – did it go as planned?
- Factors considered when assessing the student
- Assessment decision making
- Use of criteria/indicators
- Assessment philosophy (in relation to practicum)
- The significance of the lecturer's previous experience and/or intuition
- Authenticity of the assessment of the student
- Strengths of the practicum assessment process
- Challenges in the practicum assessment process
- The significance of relationships in the assessment process
- Personal reflection on the practicum assessment experience