

**Having their cake and eating it too:
Pre-service teachers' perspectives of internships.**

Ms Elaine Sharplin

Graduate School of Education

The University Of Western Australia

Perth, Australia

e-mail: esharpli@ecel.uwa.edu.au

Abstract

This qualitative study examines the perspectives of pre-service secondary teachers completing a ten-week internship while concurrently enrolled in a Graduate Diploma of Education. Participants completed an open ended qualitative survey that was analyzed to identify the significant issues from the perspectives of the interns. The reported comments illustrate the belief that the internship experience was highly valuable, enabling the interns to gain further teaching experience, qualitatively different to the practicum experience. Interns noted the heavy demands of competing university and school-based workloads; however, they recommended the experience to future pre-service teachers with strong management and organizational skills. The interns' comments demonstrate their engagement in reflective practice, supporting the position that the internship represents more than an apprenticeship model focussing on limited technical competence.

Having Their Cake And Eating It Too: Pre-service Teachers' Perspectives of Internships

Introduction

Internships offer pre-service teachers in the final stages of their course work an opportunity to extend their experience in schools beyond their practicum. The term internship is variously applied to placements of pre-service teachers in schools for periods from a school term of 10 weeks to longer placements of six to twelve months. At times, the term is equated with an "extended practicum". What appears to distinguish the internship from the practicum is authorization to teach without supervision, which is a necessary pre-requisite for entering a formal employment contract (Mayer, 1999).

Internships have been incorporated in many teacher education programmes involving four years of training, often in the final year of study (Hatton, 1996; Mayer, 1999; Mayer, 2000; Mitchell, Murray & Dobbins, 1996). The amalgamation of an internship in a shorter one-year programme has not been widely reported. Consequently, when the Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA) approached The Graduate School of Education (GSE) at The University of Western Australia (UWA) to implement internships the likely outcomes and the implications for pre-service teachers and the GSE were unknown. This study provides a preliminary evaluation of the internship programme from the perspective of some of the participating students.

Context

The introduction of the internship programme was motivated by a confluence of pressures. In 1999, only one pre-service teacher at UWA had been offered an internship through EDWA. Following discussions between EDWA and the GSE there was a dramatic increase in the number of internships offered in 2000 to pre-service secondary teachers in order to fill staffing vacancies across the state.

While national supply and demand projections predict shortages over the next five years, short term fluctuations are not easy to predict. From the perspective of EDWA, the internship model provides a means to accommodate short-term supply and demand fluctuations; however, in addition to requests for interns by EDWA, some students were independently seeking term four placements in both EDWA and private schools. For the Graduate School of Education the introduction of internships was seen as an opportunity to provide further experience for pre-service teachers, which would accommodate some perceived needs by both pre-service teachers and EDWA.

The rate of acceptance of internships suggests that pre-service teachers are keen to broaden their teaching experience. Twenty-five students, from the 2000 intake voluntarily accepted an internship, representing one seventh of the cohort. Interns were placed in rural and metropolitan Western Australian schools for ten weeks, in term four 2000.

The Graduate Diploma of Education at UWA is an "end-on" teacher education programme, involving two semesters of study following a three-year Bachelor Degree in a discipline area. Students are placed in schools for three practicum blocks: one week of observation at the beginning of semester one, followed by a five week practicum at the end of semester one

and a six week practicum in the middle of semester two. The practicum thus comprises twelve weeks in a total of 34 weeks contact time or more than one third of the course.

Pre-service teachers accepting internships were placed back in schools for term four, two weeks after the completion of their second practicum. All students were still enrolled in second semester units, which involved further scheduled university class contact time and the completion of assessments. Consequently, the demands of their university course occurred concurrently with their teaching workloads for a period of five to six weeks.

The opportunity for additional classroom experience is frequently cited as the main strength of internships. This is sometimes based on the simple premise that 'more is better' ; however, the extended time in schools has been recognized as allowing participants to develop reflective practices, appropriate methodologies and approaches, establish real relationships with students and take full responsibility for classes (Mitchell, Murray & Dobbins, 1996). Internships provide an opportunity for context specific, site-based learning and the potential for participants to develop craft knowledge, practical knowledge and reflective practice (McIntyre, 1992). The internship provides an opportunity to address what is sometimes seen as a gulf between the theory provided in teacher education institutions and the real world of teachers' work (McIntyre, 1997), providing an opportunity for the socialization of trainee teachers into the full profession (Mayer, 1999).

Criticisms of internships are often based on the perception that teaching practice in schools equates with an industrial apprenticeship model (Price, 1987, cited in Schools Council, 1989). It is argued that such a model promotes a technician mode of learning, or worse still, the development of a series of survival strategies. The acquisition of skills through practice alone results in the perpetuation of the modelled practices of mentors and socialization into the status quo. Lack of consensus between stakeholders over industrial concerns of responsibility for supervision, duty of care and appropriate salary levels are touted as justifications for rejecting the model. Despite these concerns, the Schools Council (1989) and the Queensland Board of Teacher Registration (1994, 1997) favour the introduction of the internship model. In Queensland, industrial concerns have been resolved in an agreement between key stakeholders (Mayer, 1999).

The dichotomy of school as real world experience and university education as irrelevant theory can be bridged by the notion of internships as partnership. Internships represent an opportunity for interaction between schools, tertiary institutions and employing authorities and the unification of theory with practice (McIntyre, 1997; Schools Council, 1989). The notion of partnerships is already embedded in the Graduate Diploma of Education at UWA with the linkage of pre-service teachers in specific curriculum areas with partnered schools.

The interns involved in this study were employed by EDWA, (and 1 private school) on short-term contracts, as three-year trained teachers with full professional responsibilities, including full duty of care. No mentor was assigned at the school site and the interns were not assessed as a component of their pre-service training. Coordination of the interns' continuing academic work occurred through the Director of Teaching at the GSE. Interns were placed in urban, rural and remote schools. Students were made offers of internships during the two weeks of school and university holidays and, where necessary, were required to relocate during this time.

With the prospect of continuing internships in future years an evaluation of the internship experience for students and an examination of the implications for UWA and EDWA was considered vital.

Method

This qualitative study is constructed in the interpretivist paradigm, seeking to unveil the diversity of meaning constructed by pre-service teachers within a social context (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The qualitative paradigm enables the examination of multiple dimensions of a complex issue. The view is adopted that social reality is constructed and negotiated by individuals (Reid, 1986). The research design "accepts, from the beginning, the perspectival nature of human experience" (. The frames or lenses people use to make sense of the world (Woods, 1983) are accessed through the responses of participants, enabling the researcher to identify the perceptions, feelings and attitudes of the participants and to interpret their meanings and intentions .

The case examined consists of the internship as experienced by UWA Graduate Diploma of Education pre-service teachers. The research focussed on the perspectives of the interns, seeking to understand: their reasons for accepting the internship; their experiences of combining full time work as a novice teacher and studying; their experience of socialization into the school and local community; the level of support they received from the training institution and the employing authority and the implications for future interns and all stakeholders.

Interns were mailed a qualitative questionnaire during the final weeks of term four, eight weeks after the commencement of the internship. The questionnaire contained 32 questions requiring extended written responses. The questions focussed on: the nature of the teaching experience, motivations for accepting the internship, factors affecting the choice of location, the process involved in obtaining the internship, the socialization of the interns at the school and local community level; the level of support provided by the University and EDWA and recommendations to future pre-service teachers, EDWA and UWA.

Data reduction occurred through an iterative and inductive process of summarizing, coding and categorizing the data to identify significant issues. The analysis involved the classification of concepts and the identification of connections between them (; ; .

Eleven of 25 questionnaires were returned. While this represents less than half of the pre-service teachers accepting internships, the results still provide some tentative views about the internship experience from the perspective of these students. Collection of additional perspectives in subsequent years will provide a more robust indication of the extent to which these perspectives are more widely shared. The participants consisted of seven female and four male interns. Of these, ten interns were single and one married. Interns represented a range of subject learning areas: English, Physical Education, Science, Mathematics, Languages Other Than English and Psychology. Ten of the eleven respondents were placed in EDWA schools and three quarters of interns were required to relocate to a rural or remote area to take up the internship. The relocations involved students moving up to 2000 kilometers from their homes in the Perth metropolitan area.

Findings

Influences on the decision to accept an internship

Four of the eleven pre-service teachers accepting an internship were actively seeking employment and had made direct contact with personnel in EDWA. Of these, two were looking for term four work and two were seeking employment for 2001. Three students were contacted directly by EDWA and four were contacted through the Director of Teaching.

Two motivations strongly influenced pre-service teachers to accept an internship position: a desire to gain more teaching experience and an interest in earning an income. The first of these is linked to a desire to improve employment prospects. Additional factors influencing the decision to accept an internship included: desire for different experiences, including the experience of life in the country and a desire to test out their feelings about teaching.

In just over half of the cases, the interns had a choice of location. The interns indicated that selection of the appointment location was based on a range of criteria: preference for a location close to home; preference for access to metropolitan services and facilities; proximity to family and friends; preference for teaching within their subject area; recommendations by EDWA personnel; recreational interests; geographic location and the opportunity to experience a relocation. These factors are consistent with data collected by the researcher from pre-service students involved in a rural field trip (Sharplin, 2001). The pre-service teachers identified similar factors as influencing the selection of a location for employment in the subsequent year. Of particular interest was the desire of two interns to experience a country posting in order to evaluate their desire for a long-term placement. Interest in continuing in a country placement may be an outcome of internship appointments. With the difficulty of staffing rural and remote schools this could be a significant benefit. Further research will be necessary to examine this issue.

The internship experience: Pressures and stresses

All interns described their experience of the internship as demanding in terms of workload, time and energy. Many commented on the "full time" application required.

"I generally worked 7 days a week involving school planning/assignments, research and study for exams".

"It was generally a very stressful time with very little relaxation".

"I have never worked so hard and for so long".

"I had no life for 8 weeks".

These comments are not surprising given that first year teachers report similar experiences, without the additional study load carried by the interns. Mayer (2000) similarly describes interns as "time-strapped"; however, the combination of school-based learning and study allowed interns to *"try out ideas learnt at uni"* and to *"apply the theory"*. Interns commented on the *"huge learning curve"* but highly valued the *"on the job"* learning. Interns indicated that the experience helped them to understand the process of adapting and adjusting personal teaching style and approaches to the specific context.

While interns coped with the demanding workload, they expressed concern about the competing demands of university course work and schoolwork, and the impact of this competition on the quality of their work in both contexts. Concern about the potential impact on their university results and the consequence of this for their employment prospects was the dominant concern.

"Working full time may take away from your studies".

"I believe my actual grades may have suffered".

However, the actual impact on grades was not addressed in this research. As one intern noted:

"I would have thought my uni work also suffered, although having just received my grades, I was pleasantly surprised".

This suggests a further area for research.

Interns also noted the impact of the competing work demands on the quality of the educational experience provided to students.

"The quality of my lessons definitely suffered as a result of having to complete assignments and I would have thought my uni work also suffered".

"Some of my students would be justified in claiming that they were disadvantaged".

The competing demands experienced by the interns can be attributed, in part, to the unplanned introduction of the internships. Consequently, the internships were an additional load voluntarily assumed by students rather than a planned component of the existing course structure.

The extent to which students were able to minimize the competing demands by utilizing the mid-semester holiday break for the completion of university work or preparation of teaching plans depended on the amount of notification the pre-service teachers were given of their internship placement.

"[I] got the bulk of uni work out of the way before I started teaching and did others on the weekend."

"I was lucky that I knew in the holidays I had a job and thus I did all my [curriculum] minor assignments then".

Some pre-service teachers received up to two weeks notice of their appointment and this allowed them to organize their university work commitments; however, most were unable to contact personnel at their allocated schools to obtain information about their teaching load and, consequently, they were unable to commence preparation for their teaching.

"I arrived at school Monday morning [in a remote location] and was told I had form in 5 mins then 1st period Senior English. No plans, warning and little preparation. Interns need to be flexible, resourceful and very brave".

The case has been made for the early appointment of novices to schools, prior to the end of the school year, to allow for induction before the commencement of teaching (Lennon & Fogarty, 1990). The need for the early notification of interns is even more compelling, given their continuing study load. An opportunity to make prior contact with a school is also consistent with the practicum experience of the pre-service teachers, where they make contact with their schools and classes prior to commencing teaching. Notification of intern appointments needs to occur prior to the school holidays, as the members of the school staff are often unavailable in rural and remote schools before the start of term.

Socialization into the school, the profession and the community

Arriving as a new staff member in term four of the school year can be a difficult experience for any teacher; arriving as a member of a school staff for the first time, and in many cases into a new community provides additional challenges. Most interns indicated that they were given a friendly and positive reception in schools.

"People reacted well ...and were quite helpful".

"Teachers were really helpful. Explained everything and had first few lessons planned".

In some schools very little was known or understood about internships.

"I felt that the school could have been more aware of the situation the Dip Ed students were in. Staff members in general needed to be more aware. My Head of Department thought I was on prac. for the first five weeks of my appointment".

Interns were variously mistaken for relief-staff, students on practicum or experienced temporary teachers. The concept of internships and the implementation of them by EDWA is not widely known or understood by personnel in schools. This is an area that warrants some attention by EDWA.

The interaction with experienced colleagues was perceived to be a significant benefit of becoming an intern. Interns believed that the contacts they made assisted their professional development and were beneficial for their employment prospects.

Eight of the eleven interns relocated to a rural or remote location to commence their internships. Interns were provided with housing, usually shared, through the Government Employee Housing Authority (GEHA). For some students, the opportunity to experience the process of relocation and adaptation to a new environment was one of the attractions of accepting an internship.

"I wanted to experience living in the Pilbara before I accepted a long term contract".

"A good experience for relocation next year".

For others it was a price paid in order to access the other perceived benefits.

"I have found it extremely difficult living alone and away from my family and friends. I travel back to Perth every weekend and this has been expensive ... The town ... is survivable".

The difficulty of managing competing workloads was magnified for those interns who relocated to take up their position.

"It really does take time to settle in to a new place".

"The process of fitting in and adjusting takes time and energy".

"I only had one weeks notice to get organized and move to start this job. More time would have been nice".

Relocation involves a process of acculturation to the local community and the school community, while dealing with personal isolation and dislocation (Darnell & Higgins, 1983; ;).

The interns generally felt positive about their reception within the new communities.

"I have become friends with my neighbors and staff at the school and I have BBQs with them and go to the gym and walk with a couple of other teachers. This was not immediate though".

"I liked it from the moment I arrived. I get on well with teachers from several departments - largely through getting involved in sporting and musical activities after school and also through my involvement in the school musical".

"Socially it was okay. Not much to do, but I expected that...I didn't have time to adjust to being here... It's a very hot, dry, dirty ugly town but the people are great - helpful and generous."

Social activities have been reported by Lennon and Fogarty (1990) as important opportunities to develop professional relationships with colleagues. Support from peers has been rated as highly important to novice teachers (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1991). Second year pre-service teachers placed on practicum in the Riverina area of New South Wales reported positive socialization experiences during a rural practicum . For some interns, however, their interaction and involvement in the community was limited by the extent of their workload and, in some cases, weekend travel to the metropolitan area.

"Working continuously limits social interaction".

"My partner, dog and house are in Perth – I've been up there most weekends – have not invested any effort into being absorbed into [the town's] social scene".

"I travel back to Perth every weekend and this has been expensive, but necessary for me".

For some interns, the relocation represented their first move away from their family homes. Even with a positive reception, the move away from close social and familial supports was an additional burden.

"I was a bit homesick – Mum, brothers and sisters and boyfriend in Perth".

"I think I underestimated ... the life changes it has involved ... That is, I was not only beginning a job for the first time, but also leaving home, moving away to the country ..."

Interns generally reported satisfaction with their experience of socialization into the schools and communities, although no formal induction or support services to assist with this process were described. For some, the impact of relocation and the dislocation from existing social supports was perceived as a real challenge. Given the short- term nature of the

appointments and the work-load demands, some interns chose not to attempt any integration with the community beyond the school.

Perceived differences between practicum and internship experiences

Interns made comparisons with practicum experiences, noting that the internship represented a qualitatively different experience. The most frequently cited differences related to the level of external supervision, the level of support provided and opportunities for independence.

"It's great to teach without having a mentor looking over my shoulder. Feel more relaxed about making mistakes".

"Being more independent when teaching and not having someone look over your shoulder all the time".

The practicum experience is frequently associated with a feeling of disempowerment for pre-service teachers. They describe a lack of independence and control (Mitchell, Murray & Dobbins, 1996). Perceptions of freedom from control by interns were a result of the assessment free nature of the internship. Performance during the internship was not directly linked to any assessment component within their course of study.

A negative consequence of the lack of a formal assessment component was the failure to systematically assign mentors to pre-service teachers. The value of mentors, particularly for the support of novice teachers, is well documented (Lennon & Fogarty, 1990; Power, 1987; Queensland Working Party, 1991). Assignment of mentors has the potential to enrich and support the learning experiences of the interns. Without the commitment of some induction support by EDWA the use of interns could be perceived as a staffing convenience, lacking concern for and commitment to the professional growth and developments of interns.

The identification of a potential mentor, other than a Head of Department or direct line manager, is a strategy that should be implemented with interns. Research suggests, ideally, that mentors should be older, matched for gender (Rebore, 1991) teach the same subjects and grades (Jensen, 1989) and be located at close proximity to the new teacher (Thies-Sprinthall, 1986; Zimpher & Rieger, 1988).

Despite the absence of a mentor, interns still perceived that the internship provided a sheltered work environment. Because of the short duration of the appointment, interns felt able to make mistakes without having to suffer long term consequences.

"Starting in term 4 is great as it sort of allows you to 'try before you buy'".

Interns were able to take risks and experiment with their practice, identify changes they would like to make to their personal teaching approach.

Rites of passage: From student to teacher

The transition from pre-service teacher to beginning teacher is an arduous journey for many novices (Sellars, McNally, & Rowe, 1998). Despite overwhelming support for the concept of internships, it has already been noted that interns expressed concern about the workload, stress and the impact on the achievement of university grades. In addition to these concerns, interns regretted the loss of opportunity to gain knowledge in lectures and through interaction with lecturers and peers.

The absence of interns, from the University, resulted not only in a loss of intellectual capital, it prevented students from formalizing closure of their university student life. For many students, the Graduate Diploma represents an end to at least four years of university study and for many a much longer period of connection with university life through post-graduate courses. Because of the demanding nature of the Graduate Diploma and the stresses associated with practicum placements, students build strong support networks and a high level of attachment to peers and GSE staff. With the formal attendance requirements for GSE students ending in October, and assignment submission and examinations completed by the end of November, students celebrate the completion of this year, and for most, the end to their university life. For interns, working in schools until the middle of December, and especially for those located in rural and remote areas, their inability to participate in end of year activities and achieve closure represented a significant loss.

"Feeling that I hadn't said a proper "goodbye" to uni life – when we left after prac. I thought I'd be back in 2 weeks, but I wasn't".

"...really sad about not finishing uni with my peers".

"I feel I missed out on closure and that extra bit of knowledge".

"...missing ... end of uni things (because I'm down in the country)".

By taking up an internship position, the pre-service teachers had not considered that they had lost the opportunity to complete their rites of passage from university into the world of employment, from a tertiary education institution into a secondary education institution and from the role of student to the responsibilities of credentialled teacher.

Practice and reflection

The comments of the interns indicate the importance of the internship to the development of both technical practice and professional reflection. Predictably, interns commented on aspects of their technical competence, particularly behaviour management skills.

"I taught most of the same students for 6 weeks on prac, and for the most part they were very well behaved... but I had classroom management difficulties with the students as an intern".

"I really needed to concentrate on classroom management".

"Need more behaviour management stuff. Non confrontational, defusing situations, dealing with kids who don't like you..."

The concern with behaviour management is consistent with the literature on the experiences of interns and beginning teachers. Bulletin board communication by interns in Queensland focussed on behaviour management and ideas for teaching lessons (Mayer 2000). A meta-analysis of fifty-seven international studies by identified classroom management as one of the most frequently cited areas of concern of novice teachers.

These immediate technical concerns were balanced by the responses of interns, which conveyed a strong sense of professional reflection. The extended placement in schools changed interns perceptions of schools, students and teaching. The interns commented on: increased awareness of student ability levels; the adjustment process of students dealing with new teachers; the social issues faced by students; the problems of dealing with

reluctant learners; the demanding nature of the job; the importance of organizational skills; ethical, legal and accountability issues; knowledge of personal teaching style; the impact of personal issues on performance; the socialization process for the teacher and the need for a sense of humour. For example:

"Kids up here have it tough. They deal with home issues and social issues that Perth kids possibly never will see and they still turn up for school".

"Schools have a lot of ethical, legal and educational obligations. Teachers teach for only a part of the day. Teachers have to be accountable for every action."

These issues suggest a developing understanding of the complexity of teachers' roles. Through the internship, and despite the pressures of workload, these pre-service teachers have reflected on their experiences and extended their understanding of teaching, beyond concerns for technical competence or a focus on achieving minimal levels of competence. Their reflections support the view that internships represent a learning opportunity beyond that of the industrial apprenticeship model. This is unlike the evaluation of Mayer (2000) who noted that the content of intern communications over a bulletin board was limited to technical concerns rather than reflection at a higher level. The timing of the internship, with only five weeks remaining of the university course, may be significant here. The students had been immersed in theory building and reflective practice as part of their course of study. The supervision of previous practicum experiences had emphasized reflective practices. The internship represented a further opportunity to apply these skills and understandings, heightened by the immediate relevance of their reflection to future, potential employment opportunities and choices.

Supporting interns: School staff and EDWA

Most interns were placed on full time teaching loads. This is consistent with the experience of novice teachers (Department of Education, Employment and Training 1991) but contrary to the position widely advocated in the literature that novice teachers should be gradually inducted into the profession with a reduced workload (Carter, 1982; Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1991; Lennon & Fogarty, 1990; ; Zimpher & Rieger, 1988). According to no other profession expects a novice to commence full duties and responsibilities immediately. Internships implemented in Queensland place interns on a 50 percent workload (Mayer, 1999).

Nearly half the interns were teaching outside of their main subject area. One English Major taught Drama, Career Education, Music and the Gifted and Talented Program. A Physical Education Major delivered Business Procedure, School-work Based Learning and Tourism classes. The practice of placing interns beyond their area of immediate expertise adds to the planning and preparation load. Interns in this position were unable to use the limited number of resources with which they were familiar. Some were fortunate enough to be able to call on personal interests, while others simply tried to keep in front of the students; however, one intern in this position made the recommendation:

"don't be afraid of teaching subjects which you are not trained in. It helps widen your experience and it's fun learning with the kids".

Half of the interns indicated that the school had made some special arrangements to accommodate the demands of their university workload. The schools provided some additional non-teaching time (duties other than teaching time - DOTT), time off to travel to university and a reduced load while university assessment tasks were being completed.

"We have great support from our administration. and we get out there and do it".

"Extra DOTT was given which was helpful".

The levels of support provided to interns differed widely depending on the particular staff at the allocated schools. Some interns were provided with high levels of support and staff who were responsive to any difficulties experienced by the interns.

"They lightened my workload, passing my "worst" (behaviour-wise) class on to another teacher".

For others, they were left to "sink or swim".

"...more help was needed in the first few weeks".

"I had a couple of crises in week three and four and I felt I could have had a little more support."

This is consistent with the view adopted by some practitioners that one's first year of teaching should involve a degree of discomfort as part of the initiation ritual (Johnston & Ryan, 1983). It may also account for the large number of beginning teachers that leave the profession within the first three to five years. Kronowitz (1992) noted that the separation rate for young teachers in the US was alarmingly high: 15 percent after the first year, 15 percent after the second year and 10 percent after the third year.

Two thirds of interns suggested ways that schools or EDWA could provide additional support. These suggestions included: provision of more information related to relocation (specifically information related to housing); reduction of teaching load to complete university assessments; provision of more information about the school context and more staff support, particularly from Heads of Learning Areas. identified the need for information about the community, school philosophy and positive interaction with colleagues as necessary for the successful induction of beginning teachers.

University support of interns

Most interns reported satisfaction with the level of support provided by the GSE. Interns noted the provision of special arrangements: additional support from lecturers, particularly curriculum specialists; the granting of extensions and adaptation of assessments; rescheduling of exams and use of technology for the delivery of exams and supportive communication.

Students suggested that additional support could be provided by a greater degree of coordination of all requirements through a single staff member; using additional telephone support; providing longer extensions or exemptions from assessments or the reduction of workload in the final semester.

"It could have been more relevant to do a topic which I was experiencing at the school - behaviour management or using student outcome levels".

Curriculum units and curriculum staff were recognized for the high level of support and the relevance of the content of units and their assessments.

"[Curriculum lecturers] let me basically redesign the assessment so that I could use my Year 8 work. This was a hard class, so the only way I could get through the work was to combine the uni and school requirements".

Surprisingly, none of the interns proposed a more formal amalgamation of the requirements of the internship into the course structure.

Continuing employment opportunities

The interns' perspectives that their experiences and contacts were advantageous to their employment prospects seem justified. Three quarters of the interns had the opportunity to continue at their current school in the next school year. Continuity of position was unavailable where interns had been placed in short term leave vacancies. Two thirds of interns would have chosen to stay in their location if the option was available. This was consistent for both metropolitan and rural appointments. This stands as an endorsement of the positive nature of the internship experience and supports the pre-service teachers' perceptions of the value of the internship to the securing of further employment.

Discussion

All students recommended the internships as a valuable learning experience. The internship was perceived as more than simply an additional practicum. It represented a qualitatively different experience because of the freedom from assessment. This freedom exposed the interns to a more authentic classroom experience without the protection and support provided by a mentor responsible for assessment. The interns gained confidence in their ability to deal with the "real" situation.

Interns revealed changed perceptions, indicating engagement in a reflective process. The ability of the interns to reflect is noteworthy, given the workload demands. Faced with competing demands of study and full time employment, the interns maintained predominantly positive attitudes.

All interns recommend internships as valuable to future students, however, some recommended a process of selection to identify pre-service teachers with appropriate coping skills. The current process of informal networking may not result in the selection of the pre-service teachers best suited to the opportunity of an internship. The availability of internships and the number of positions available were not widely known by University staff or students. Consequently a word of mouth process appears to have evolved and resulted in direct approaches to EDWA by some students. No attempt was made to implement a selection process that would ensure identification of appropriate criteria or the suitability of pre-service teachers. A process that ensures equitable access to internships for all interested pre-service teachers and quality of educational experience for schools and students is needed. From the interns' comments, it is their perception that not all pre-service teachers would cope with the demands of the internship. The National Competency Framework for Beginning Teachers is used at the Ipswich campus of the University of Queensland to identify pre-service teachers able to meet the Queensland Board of Teacher registration requirements, as part of the internship selection process (Mayer, 1999). This could be examined for application within the GSE.

It is recommended that students interested in internships should be briefed by EDWA and invited to complete an expression of interest. Curriculum lecturers and the Director of Teaching practice could be asked to provide a reference for those students expressing an interest in an internship. A numerical ranking could be used to indicate their perception of the students' suitability for an internship. Development of a clear timeline for such a selection

and appointment process may ensure that students have longer preparation time in which to complete course work and prepare for their teaching assignment.

In addition, all interns could be provided with a single day induction with EDWA similar to that provided for beginning teachers at the commencement of the year. The induction could address professional and relocation issues.

Continuing placement of pre-service teachers in internships may warrant a restructuring of the fourth term of the Graduate Diploma to tailor the current course demands more appropriately with the internship. The difficulty of this is the need to address the dual needs of interns and other students. Because of the unexpected numbers involved in 2001, linkages with the course structure were not formalized. It will be necessary to review the course structure if similar numbers of students are placed in internships in subsequent years. The key issues, from the perspective of the interns, are: access to lectures in absentia; negotiation of assessment topics; the quantity of assessments; the integration of support mechanisms and the completion of rites of passage. Technology could be used to address some of these needs. Mayer (2000) noted the effective use of a bulletin board for the support and development of interns in Queensland. The technology was particularly successful for those located in rural and remote locations.

On the basis of the comments of these interns it would seem that internships offer pre-service teachers a valuable additional classroom learning experience that complements their university based learning. While the students report satisfaction with the experience, there are clearly ways that the internship can be improved for the benefit of all parties involved in the partnership. Development of strategies to address the issues raised by the interns will strengthen the value of the experience, while embedding the structure more formally within the supporting institutions.

A further research agenda has been highlighted as a result of this initial study. Given the low response rate, the findings presented here can represent only tentative findings. A replication of this study, with subsequent cohorts, will provide additional perspectives to inform judgements about the success of this venture. The perspective of others involved in the internship partnership needs to be gathered: students taught by interns; school based staff; EDWA administrators; and University staff. Longitudinal perspectives of interns who continue in placements for a further year and reflection on the impact of their internship would provide valuable insights.

The internship has the potential to provide short-term solutions to teacher supply problems for employing authorities. However, it must represent more than a staffing convenience to the Department of Education. There is potential for the internship to be used to provide an effective induction for pre-service teachers, assisting with their transition to full time employment and promoting the acceptance of positions in remote and rural locations. These represent interesting possibilities that require further exploration.

Conclusion

With the proposal by the Australian Council of Deans of Education (1998) to introduce two-year end-on teacher education courses, such as Master of Teaching programs, it is likely that internships will again become a significant issue in pre-service education course structures. This study supports the value of the internship structure running parallel to the completion of a Graduate Diploma in Education. The internship provided a further, voluntary, qualitatively different learning opportunity to pre-service teachers. In addition to extending their practical teaching experience from twelve weeks to 22 weeks, there is evidence that the experience also extended the interns reflective practices, enabling them to theorize

about their teaching practices and make informed decisions about their future employment opportunities. By completing the internship concurrently with the completion of the Graduate Diploma in Education students optimized their learning experiences by the completion of their training credential, while gaining an additional paid school-based learning opportunity. In this way, students not only have their cake and eat it too, but also can afford to pay for the purchase!

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