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## Learning the Words: Supervising Teachers and the Language of Impact in an Initial Teacher Education Programme

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## Learning the Words: Supervising Teachers and the Language of Impact in an Initial Teacher Education Programme

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*Abstract: The language of “impact” has been foregrounded in the recent lexicon of Australian initial teacher education (ITE). How teacher education programmes and supervising teachers identify and assess the impact of pre-service teachers’ work with learners across a professional placement is a pressing issue for ITE providers. This paper reports on qualitative analysis of the language of supervising teachers’ summative assessments of pre-service teachers’ final-year professional experience placements in relation to impact. Analysis of written comments that addressed the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers Graduate Standards revealed that the language of impact is still emerging within the discourse of supervising teachers. This has professional learning implications for all ITE stakeholders.*

**Keywords:** Initial teacher education; Impact; Australia; Supervising teachers

The language of *impact* is increasingly entering the initial teacher education (ITE) lexicon. It is starting to manifest in the way in which supervising teachers (sometimes referred to as colleague teachers or mentors) report on the achievements of pre-service teachers (PSTs) at the end of professional experience placements. Future accreditation of ITE programmes in Australia will incorporate an assessment of how effectively providers assess the impact of PSTs during their professional experience placements in schools (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2016a). In response to political and community concerns about the quality of teacher education and the effectiveness of graduate teachers, AITSL (2015a) announced that ITE providers must collect evidence of the impact of their pre-service and graduate teachers on student learning. This undertaking has arisen from recommendations for improving ITE programmes made in the *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers* report (Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group [TEMAG], 2014).

Although ITE providers may be sceptical about the construction and representation of teacher education as a policy problem (Husbands, 2016), the degree of fairness of popular critiques of teacher education (Louden, 2008), and some of the underpinning neo-liberal policy-drivers (Fitzgerald & Knipe, 2016), it is not an unreasonable expectation that a holistic evaluation of the impact of PSTs on learners is a purposeful and worthwhile endeavour

throughout all ITE programmes. Such evaluation, undertaken in a spirit of continuous improvement, may well help to foster a more effective interface between theory, policy and practice. This article analyses how a sample of supervising teachers responded to the assessment challenges of capturing the impact of PSTs' work with a specific cohort of students. The research question addressed by the article is, 'What can the language used in assessment reports, submitted by supervising teachers supporting Intern PSTs in their final professional experience placements, reveal about supervising teacher conceptualisations and understandings of the ITE impact agenda?'

In order to investigate the implications of decisions about measuring the impact of ITE, there needs to be an appreciation of the complex cross-currents of factors influencing the impact space. These include: the changing nature of university-school partnerships (Ure, Gough, & Newton, 2009; Greany & Brown, 2015); shifting conceptions of the purpose and nature of school-based professional experiences towards more clinical practice (Conroy, Hulme, & Menter, 2013; Cordingley, 2015); varying ways that school and university supervising staff perceive the PST professional experience (Dinham, 2013; Allen, Ambrosetti, & Turner, 2013); the complexity of the nature of assessment during PSTs professional experience (Allen, 2011); raised expectations of the educative mentoring role of the supervising teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Trevethen, 2017); and a recognition that impact narratives might represent a further disruption to "the micro-politics of teacher induction" (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). A further important consideration is that PSTs can be understandably consumed, whilst undertaking school-based professional experience, by the immediate day-to-day demands of planning, teaching and curricula and thus may be ill-positioned to implement reform ideals. They may be too busy *getting by* (Bloomfield, 2010; Moore, 2003) to appreciate the bigger strategic learning picture. The existence of this complex architecture of relationships and expectations means that it will be important for schools, education systems, and universities to work in partnership so that the evidencing of pre- and in-service teachers' impact on student learning can be seen as adding value to the core work of schools. As such, recently introduced ITE accreditation requirements in Australia may offer opportunities to highlight the "threads of student learning" that have the potential to support PSTs' capacities to generate and foster student engagement and achievement (Hamel & Merz, 2005, p. 166).

When supervising teachers capture high quality teaching and learning and ascribe it to the impact of PSTs in their classrooms, it reveals how an ITE programme, constituting a complex weave of professional and disciplinary units of university study and preparation linked to professional experience placements, can align elements to support pre-service teachers to undertake high quality work with young people. The following excerpt from the final assessment report of an Intern PST placed with a combined Year 3-4 class in a rural Tasmanian primary school context, models how an impressed supervising teacher brought together a synthesised judgment of the PST's achievements against three key dimensions of Professional Practice detailed in the Australian Graduate Professional Standards, specifically, Standard 3: *Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning*; Standard 4: *Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments*; and Standard 5: *Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning* (AITSL, 2011).

*Ella was well-prepared and organised for all teaching experiences. She planned all lessons in advance and demonstrated a clear understanding of content, student learning and effective teaching strategies. She established appropriate learning goals which were linked to the Australian Curriculum. Ella demonstrated outstanding initiative during her placement and implemented a range of strategies to support students within the class.... She related to the*

*students incredibly well and has forged strong relationships with all children in the class. She also communicated highly effectively with parents/carers and colleagues....Throughout her school experience, Ella provided both verbal and written feedback to students on a daily basis, outlining their progress and areas for improvement. Throughout her placement, Ella assessed a range of tasks in all curriculum areas. Ella taught a learning sequence about homophones. During this unit she created a test to assess the students' prior knowledge and administered a post-test to gauge what the students had learnt. The way Ella presented these data was quite impressive and they clearly demonstrated the positive gains the students made in this area. All of this was done without any prompting, which was just outstanding. Ella also created rubrics and checklists to assess and record students' work and progress.*

Here, the supervising teacher clearly outlined the impact of this PST's practice during the placement. Ella was described as coming to know her students in complex ways, regularly and meticulously charting their progress, and modelling high quality clinical practice. The supervising teacher captured something of this in the language she used in the assessment report and provided a strong example of the PST's approach to assessing the impact of her teaching via the example of an English unit focused on homophones.

Notably, neither the TEMAG report (2014), nor AITSL accreditation documentation (2011; 2016b) defines impact on student learning in terms that can be easily interpreted by classroom teachers, or in a form suitable for immediate concrete action by teacher educators. This is evident even of AITSL guidance documents with the word "impact" in their title (AITSL 2016a; b, c). Despite this, impact on student learning is not defined within placement settings by consensus but by recognition of impact on students and Ella's supervising teacher articulates this well. Nevertheless, in the absence of a definition of impact, teacher educators and school-based colleague teachers are likely to struggle in helping PSTs to pin down what the concept might mean for them and their students.

It is clear that much of the emerging thinking about impact draws upon the recent work of Professor John Hattie, Chair of the AITSL Board (2014–present). In his book, *Visible Learning* (2012), Hattie called upon teachers to set achievable, challenging goals appropriate to the knowledge level and capabilities of all class members. The aim was to evaluate and support individual and collective student learning progress, and to achieve explicitly articulated outcomes that are clearly visible not only to the teacher but also to the students (Hattie, 2015). Hattie's hope was that teachers identify not as input-oriented process workers, but as outcomes-focused change agents, who set challenging goals for their students (drawing upon data about their prior knowledge and attainment), exert maximum effort alongside them in pursuit of these goals, and rigorously evaluate the student thinking and learning that contributes to the subsequent assessment of student achievement. Hattie (2016) urged teachers to look through the student lens to generate self-empowered and enthusiastic classroom learners, whose progress and growth over time is mutually recognisable by teachers and students alike. This is a pedagogically progressive—albeit elusive—vision of impact.

From this vision, it is difficult to isolate the relationship between an ITE programme and school student learning outcomes – indeed research into the relationship between the two is both limited and problematic (Burn & Mutton, 2015; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). The TEMAG report recognised a lack of research on impact methodologies (Dinham, 2015). Dinham added to the debate by categorising PST practicum evidence of classroom impact as “the most difficult data to obtain” (p. 12).

Subsequent AITSL documentation (2014–2016) similarly acknowledged the challenges. The form and nature of impact data have been described in broad terms only; case studies and portfolios, which constitute a mix of quantitative and qualitative data, well-constructed classroom observations and student surveys, and outputs from cross-institutional data accumulation partnerships (AITSL, 2016b; Dinham, 2015; Mayer, 2015). Nonetheless, AITSL (2016a) anticipated the evolution of relevant and increasingly nuanced mechanisms in response to this mandated priority.

In this article, the researchers recognise the complexity of defining impact (Diez, 2010) but also acknowledge that impact is linked to the notions of visible learning and clinical practice, with teachers seeing themselves as intentional agents of change and perpetual action researchers into the effectiveness of their teaching interventions. Moreover, in impact-conscious classrooms students will be able to recognise and celebrate their learning progress. The researchers also acknowledge that impact is contextual. It depends upon institutional, disciplinary, learner, task-specific, and many other variables, including available resources, previous work undertaken with learners by present and past teachers, the nature of the learning space, time of day, or even the weather!

The establishment of clear causal relationships in regard to the impact of PSTs on student learning is hindered by a multitude of factors. These include, for example, the inevitable variability between schools, the quality of mentoring by supervising teachers in schools, the quality of preparation through university units, the short-term nature of most professional experience placements, and sometimes home or school environments that engage only intermittently in fostering effective learning (Brett et al., 2016). Nevertheless, although analysing the relationship between teacher education and student learning is “fraught with difficulty” (Grossman, 2008, p. 21), a focus on the process may be beneficial for all stakeholders.

The emphasis on impact is consistent with a proposed shift in teacher education away from helping teachers to learn about teaching towards learning to teach – with a concomitant shift from knowledge to practice (Husbands, 2016). This is seen in the global turn towards practice-based teacher education (Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Mathewson Mitchell & Reid, 2017; Zeichner, 2012). It has become increasingly clear that simply being in a school undertaking a professional experience placement and securing classroom experience is not sufficient for effective PST learning (Grudnoff, 2011). The rapid introduction of Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) instruments through ITE accreditation is in response to this issue. The emphasis on such strategies demonstrates the perceived need for increasing accountability in relation to how components of ITE programmes contribute to graduate outcomes (AITSL, 2015b). A forensic focus upon reviewing the impact of teaching interventions through sustained professional experience may bring with it a stronger emphasis on thinking about students’ learning and progress (Guha et al., 2017).

The overall argument of this paper is that the assessment of impact is challenging, complex and requiring of additional thought and professional dialogue. The excerpt quoted above—relating to the impact of Ella in her placement—is a relatively unrepresentative good practice supervising teacher assessment, and this calibre of review is only noted in one other of the remaining reports analysed for the purpose of this paper. The remainder of this article mainly constitutes an analysis of absence. The article explores why supervising teachers may have found commenting upon impact a difficult exercise and what lessons might be learned by ITE partnerships about raising the level of impact consciousness in work with schools and supervising teachers. It suggests professional learning implications for all stakeholders involved in the impact space,

including policy-makers, regulatory authorities, ITE providers, schools and supervising teachers and pre-service teachers themselves.

## Study Context

For this research, a qualitative study was undertaken as part of a broader investigation into how ITE programmes might seek to capture the impact of PSTs teaching upon student learners, and promote deeper and richer thinking about impact on the part of supervising teachers and PSTs (Brett et.al, 2016). The participants were school-based supervising teachers. The research drew on a database of final placement summative reports related to University of Tasmania (UTAS) PSTs (n=27) who had completed internship placements in a variety of Tasmanian public schools as part of a Teacher Internship Placement Programme (UTAS, 2016). The interns were drawn from a range of teaching programmes: Bachelor of Education (Primary); Masters of Teaching (Secondary and Primary) and Bachelor of Education (Health and Physical Education). The research complied with ethical approval granted by the Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee to analyse the anonymised reports written by supervising teachers employed by the Department of Education, Tasmania. Unlike most pre-service teacher placements that usually take place over five or six weeks, these internship placements took place over a full academic year.

UTAS PSTs in their final year of study were eligible to apply for an internship and, if successful, were attached to a school for the duration of that year, giving them the chance to work alongside experienced teachers and embed practical teaching skills into their final year of study. The interns were selected by the Department of Education, Tasmania as part of a competitive process as being relatively high performing compared to some of their peers, based on their academic transcripts to date, and with previous successful experience in school placement contexts. Most of the participating schools were categorised as hard-to-staff; therefore, this programme sought to provide employment pathways for high-performing graduates to school communities, which generally struggled to recruit or retain teachers (Guha et al., 2017). The conditions for successful internship applicants included a scholarship of \$15,000 and a guaranteed job in the department should the internship be completed successfully (Bird, 2015). As such, the group of PSTs whose practice was being assessed were comparatively well-placed to demonstrate impact in their classroom teaching. They were positively positioned, for example, to build relationships with students, observe and understand their prior achievement, and to undertake a wide range of work with students.

The importance of a structured mentoring role for supervising teachers was not part of the initial focus at the launch of the Internship Programme, but specific briefing events were held for supervising teachers and school Principals. A press release quoted the then Dean of Education, Professor John Williamson as saying, “The opportunity for education students to work closely with skilled school-based practitioners is an excellent way to ensure integration of the best relevant research and the necessary classroom skills to promote student learning” (UTAS, 2016). The Australian Education Union [AEU] Tasmanian Branch (AEU Tasmania), 2017) also commented that, “Anecdotally, the reports back from classroom mentor teachers who participated in the program during 2016 are positive, with perceptions that this is a very beneficial program for all participants.” The quantity of teaching undertaken by interns across the academic year generated ample evidence for supervising teachers to consider in assessing the interns against the APST Graduate Teacher Standards (AITSL, 2014). The contributions of the supervising teachers analysed for this article were drawn from assessment reports produced two terms into the interns’ full year in the classroom.

## Methodology

The research approach adopted for this study was guided by an interpretivist paradigm (Smith, 2008). Interpretive inquiries assume that people create and associate their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interact with the world around them. An inductive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The principles of a data-driven inductive approach are laid out in Boyatzis (1998), where he notes that the data are extracted from the “words and syntax of the raw information” and through this process “perspectives inherent in the information can be brought forward and recognised” (p. 30). The thematic analysis was conducted according to the following six phases: 1) Familiarisation; 2) Coding; 3) Finding themes; 4) Reviewing themes; 5) Defining themes; and 6) Reporting (Boyatzis, 1998). The results are reported using pseudonyms to maintain the anonymity of the participants.

The source of the data for this study were the supervising teachers’ summative assessments of the PSTs’ performance while on professional experience. The written reports were constructed according to the APST Graduate Standards (AITSL, 2014). The Graduate Standards provide the guides and grading criteria for supervising teachers in reaching judgments about impact (AITSL, 2014). While the Focus Areas within all of the Standards relate to PST practice, the most relevant Standards to this study which reference PSTs’ impact on student learning include: Standard 3 *Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning*; and Standard 5 *Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning*. Within these standards the following descriptors are especially pertinent in enabling the drawing of conclusions about impact from the data analysed in the supervising teachers’ reports:

- 3.1 *Establish challenging learning goals*: Set learning goals that provide achievable challenges for students of varying abilities and characteristics;
- 3.2 *Plan, structure and sequence learning programs*: Plan lesson sequences using knowledge of student learning, content and effective teaching strategies;
- 3.6 *Evaluate and improve teaching programs*: Demonstrate broad knowledge of strategies that can be used to evaluate teaching programmes to improve student learning (A developmental indicator here is: Develops and uses evaluative tools and strategies aimed at improving teaching practice and student learning).
- 5.1 *Assess student learning*: Demonstrate understanding of assessment strategies, including informal and formal, diagnostic, formative and summative approaches to assess student learning (A developmental indicator here is: Identifies and *implements* [our emphasis] strategies to assess student learning); and
- 5.4 *Interpret student data*: Demonstrate the capacity to interpret student assessment data to evaluate student learning and modify teaching practice (A developmental indicator here is: Uses assessment data to evaluate student learning).

Drawing on the supervising teachers’ commentaries, assessment judgments, and examples of PST achievement in relation to these standards, attention was focused on analysing the evaluative text. Consistent with a qualitative approach, supervising teacher reports were coded thematically (Creswell, 2014). While some themes were generated from the data and the silences within the data, consistent with an inductive thematic approach (Ryan & Bernard, 2000), they were primarily shaped by the detailed APST descriptors. The language of the APST assisted with the manual coding of the data in the assessment reports—in seeking text that referenced *impact*, words such as *learning*, *effective*, *achievement*, *assessment*, *evaluation*, and *data* were particular nodes for review.

The assessment paperwork completed by the supervising teachers required that each of the 37 Focus Areas within the Graduate Standards be assessed in relation to “achieved and exceeded” or “competently demonstrated” levels of achievement. There was also a “failed to



demonstrate” category, which was not used for any of the PSTs in this cohort. Comments and support for assessment judgments came in synthesis form as a holistic judgment across the Standard 3, 4, and 5 descriptors rather than in a summative statement for each one. In other words, the assessment paperwork rolled Standards 3-5 together under a title delineated “Supervising Teacher Comments: Professional Practice Standards 3, 4, and 5.”

Importantly, the professional experience assessments that constituted this data set were gathered just as Australian ITE providers were starting to engage in the development of TPAs. Changes within Australian ITE accreditation focused considerable attention on ways of assessing evidence of PST practice against the Graduate Teacher Standards, however the development of TPAs was, at this time, in its infancy. Subsequent policy work, responses from ITE providers and the establishment of TPA consortia have since generated specific and elaborate instruments and approaches for assessing, moderating and reporting PST practice. What is reported here precedes this TPA development but contributes to understandings of what constitutes impact and evidence of graduate teacher practice.

## Findings

The following text combines the final four steps of inductive thematic analysis - finding themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and reporting findings. The following themes emerged from the data and are discussed and exemplified below: there was a preponderant focus upon teaching inputs rather than learning outputs in the supervising teachers’ reports; there was generally a lack of precision and specificity in how supervising teachers detailed and evidenced their assessment judgments – especially where they related to school students’ learning; there was a greater emphasis upon discussion of classroom and behaviour management than upon the quality of school students’ learning; commentaries tended to omit details about how supervising teachers knew that the PST had promoted progression in the students’ learning; and few supervising teacher reports referred to the qualitative, affective, and caring impact of PSTs’ professional practice.

### Emphasis upon Teaching Inputs over Learner Outputs

When reviewing the main themes a clear finding that emerged from the supervising teachers’ assessment comments was the preponderant focus upon teaching inputs rather than learning outputs. One PST working with a Preparatory class and assessed as *Exceeding* expectations on most of the Graduate Standards is an exemplar for many of her intern colleagues and a case study of the types of written feedback received from supervising teachers foregrounding teacher inputs over learner outputs. A commendably thorough and detailed report referenced a number of positive qualities in relation to the intern’s professional practice. For example she “*set explicit and achievable learning goals for students*”; “*engaged children through use of thought-provoking and clever questioning*”; “*provided timely feedback and described ways students could improve*”; she “*regularly displayed initiative*” and her communication skills were excellent. The description of the intern’s personal qualities was glowing, culminating with the statement “*Our parents love Chloe and some want her to continue on with teaching their children next year!*” This is impact indeed! Yet the references to the quality of student learning in the report were opaque and unspecific: “*Chloe regularly improves her teaching and/or student learning outcomes*” and she “*uses effective communication strategies to support student understanding, participation, engagement and achievement.*” These positive statements and assessment

judgments in relation to a high-performing PST beg the questions “How do you know?” and “What is the evidence?” We are told that “*Chloe’s use of resources has been excellent providing fulfilling and motivating learning experiences for all students.*” Fulfilling and motivating are clearly positive adjectives, but what did the students learn? Interpretation of data was one of the few assessment judgments ticked as competent rather than exceeding expectations, but there was no reference in the commentary to the intern’s use of data.

#### **A Lack of Precision and Specificity in Assessment Judgments**

Many of the examples of positive and sometimes glowing feedback from supervising teachers were ambiguous and failed to communicate much in relation to the PSTs’ knowledge, practice or engagement of learners, for example;

- *Tracy reflects on lesson success, student learning and behaviour and her own teacher performance in a very mature manner which guides her future lesson planning, delivery and feedback style to enable all students to learn and achieve to the best of their ability.*
- *Monica’s thorough and detailed planning, her attention to detail, her calm and methodical approach in the classroom, have enabled her to achieve a safe, inclusive and supportive learning environment in which students are able to participate purposefully and successfully.*
- *Karen has always been very well prepared with quality planning.*
- *Martin put effort and thought into the development of appropriately challenging and interesting learning programs.*
- *Louise clearly evaluates lessons and overall units of work so that students are engaged in the learning process.*
- *Graham’s sequence of Science and Maths lessons was well planned and showed an understanding of assessment needs.*
- *Throughout her practicum, Aleisha has provided engaging learning experiences that have given all students the opportunity to participate and succeed.*
- *Tania has kept reliable records of students’ progress through each of her units of work and used these to evaluate her own teaching practices’.*

In these assessment judgments the supervising teachers offer generalised, adjectival, and overarching comments that provide an in-looking moderator with no sense of the basis upon which the assessment verdict had been reached, and no evidence base for the PST to cite that they have definitively “met” a particular teaching standard. What criteria was the supervising teacher using in concluding that planning was high quality [Karen]? To what extent did planning inputs serve to promote effective student learning [Monica and Graham]? To what extent did student engagement promote their progress and success [Aleisha], and, if PSTs were keeping “reliable records” of student progress [Tania], what were they recording? It is not obvious why school students’ work was used solely to self-reflect on teaching practice rather than reflect more deeply on the students’ learning.

#### **Classroom and Behaviour Management Foregrounded**

In reviewing key themes that emerged from the supervising teachers’ reports, it is worth quoting in their entirety two of the comments made by supervising teachers when invited to draw together synthesised judgments across the Graduate Standards 3 to 5. The

first PST was viewed as exceeding the expected standards for both 3.2 and 5.1—key standards as far as impact is concerned:

*Angela has chosen and used engaging activities to catch student's attention. She has developed her questioning techniques and investigated different ways to enable different children to show their learning through their answers being shared with others. She always uses appropriate language when addressing students and teachers. She is developing a range of techniques to manage challenging behaviour. She is becoming more aware of the need to continually scan children as they sit and work and deal with problem behaviour early. She is also learning to wait until she has all students' attention before beginning to talk. Angela has formed positive relationships with many students, and is continually providing them with feedback on their progress. She has also developed her own incentives and motivation to enable challenging students to manage their own behaviour.*

In this case, the supervising teacher chose to talk almost entirely about Standard 4, the creation of supportive and well-managed learning environments, apart from the reference to “providing them with feedback on their progress”. Yet the assessment judgments indicated that this PST was having a very positive impact on student learning via both her planning and assessment strategies. We do not hear any detail about these areas.

Similar absences emerge in relation to a cumulative assessment judgment for a PST placed with a Year 3 class and deemed by the supervising teacher to be “exceeding expectations” in each of the three Graduate Standards and their focus areas:

*Kate demonstrated the ability to maintain a well-organized and functioning classroom. She implemented effective strategies to support student engagement and participation. Kate employed a range of effective questioning techniques that were thought-provoking for students. Kate demonstrated the ability to implement practical strategies in regards to behaviour management. She implemented strategies to assess students learning across a range of curriculum areas. Kate provided timely feedback to students on their progress and identified areas for future focus.*

Without doubt, this PST impacted positively upon both the school and the students with whom she worked on this placement. It was obvious that she engaged effectively with all stakeholders. But again most of the comments by the supervising teacher reference the quality of teaching inputs rather than the quality of learning outputs. As with other PST reports, the invitation to provide evidence in relation to Focus Areas 3.6 and 5.4, in particular, was ignored.

#### **Little Comment on Pre-Service Teachers' Promotion of Learners' Progression**

A thematic review finding in relation to more developed comments by supervising teachers is that often there was an evidence step missing. Subsequent comments from supervising teachers are more focused and evident of slightly higher quality feedback. These notations are certainly more representative of the principles and practices envisaged by TEMAG and AITSL, yet still remain quite elusive.

- *Kylie has planned Science and Geography units where she has demonstrated the ability to assess students throughout their learning opportunities and has developed rating criteria that reflects their knowledge on the specific areas*
- *Deb has worked closely with students of varying abilities adjusting her lessons in order to meet students' individual needs. She is able to use her knowledge*

- and observations of where a student is at in their learning and offer suggestions that are responsive to enhancing their current knowledge.*
- *Laura has a good knowledge of formal and informal assessment strategies and can apply these appropriately depending upon the task. Laura is able to use data collected from assessments to inform subsequent lessons.*
  - *Leanne has been involved in the assessment of learning including taking running records to assess reading development, and designed an assessment task at the end of an engaging learning sequence in Mathematics.*
  - *Rebecca's lesson content was highly engaging and helped students move forward in their knowledge and skills.*
  - *On multiple occasions and for multiple year levels, Madison developed and utilised very effective rubrics as an assessment and feedback tool.*
  - *Harry has designed learning opportunities enabling students to achieve to their potential. A future focus for Harry is to maintain records on student achievement and implement strategies to assess student learning.*

Many questions arise from these summative statements as the evidence upon which the assessments have been made is unclear. Issues raised and requiring clarification include; What did the ratings criteria or running records or rubrics that were designed by PSTs [Kylie, Leanne, Madison] tell us about the students' learning? What did a well-designed assessment task at the end of an 'engaging' unit tell us about the students' progress in the relevant area of Mathematics [Leanne]? How did PST Deb – and her supervising teacher - know that her "adjustments" to lessons were effective? How did PST Rebecca and her supervising teacher know that the students had "moved forward" in their knowledge and skills? What assessment data were used by PST Laura to "inform subsequent lessons"? (And, did the subsequent lessons therefore have more "impact" than the earlier lessons?). It was good see the supervising teacher in the final example cited here look to the future and provide a developmental target for a high achieving PST, but a question that is finessed is how the PST [Harry] and the supervising teacher knew that (all?) students had "achieved to their potential". It is reassuring to be informed that good assessment strategies were implemented by nearly all of the PSTs and pleasing to hear that feedback was provided on progress, but what did the assessment strategies reveal about student achievement prompted by the stimulus of the PSTs' teaching, and what exactly was the "progress" that was mentioned in passing?

Too often assessments of 'effectiveness' or success were stated as assessment judgments without any underpinning evidence. PSTs on this intern programme were undoubtedly and overwhelmingly performing well and impressing the supervising teachers with their professionalism, hard work, and commitment. Unfortunately, in the absence of any proof of their impact, judgments tended to become subjective professional assertions of performance.

Another example from a high performing PST and a supervising teacher conscientiously reporting on her teaching achievements underlines this observation:

*Nancy has well-developed and organised planning. She ensures her planning is linked to relevant curriculum documents and all learning goals are achievable. Nancy trials new teaching strategies and critically reflects on the effectiveness of each new strategy. Nancy engages parents to support their children's learning. Nancy maintains a supportive and safe learning environment at all times. She uses effective behaviour management techniques. Nancy assesses and reports on student learning effectively and in a variety of ways. She provides timely feedback to students and assists them to identify ways to improve.'*

In augmenting and tightening assessment judgments such as this, a consideration could be for supervising teachers to question, “How does this positively articulated good practice add up?” A thought that supervising teachers might hold in their heads is the question, ‘So what?’ This assessment of PST Nancy might have concluded along the lines,

*All of this good teaching practice has impacted positively upon the Year 1 children’s learning. The evidence for this comes from detailed assessments of the children’s progress in English and Maths undertaken at the end of units of work focused upon x and y. Target children have made demonstrable cognitive gains in their reading and conceptual understanding of number. More qualitative observational evidence also provides evidence of the children being more confident and engaged in their learning and preparedness to articulate their ideas verbally.*

At this point impact would start to be conveyed and understood more effectively, and with more specificity.

### **Qualitative and Caring Aspects of Impact**

It is important to add that the impact of a PST’s work with students should not be assessed solely in relation to the students’ cognitive progress or test scores. The capacity to build deep relationships, promote social justice, engage disaffected young people in challenging socio-economic settings, encourage, support, nurture, and palpably care can all be fundamentally important elements of teacher effectiveness (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Kearns & Hart, 2017; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016). Of course, the logic of strong interpersonal skills and relationships, empathetic understanding, and professional alertness to context being in place is that it would be surprising if there were not links between these qualities being projected and some impact upon the quality of students’ learning. A second high quality outlier supervising teacher report captured a powerful narrative of a History PST working with older teenagers in a relatively tough urban secondary school setting. Even if there are no data or evidence-informed capstones to this feedback, the narrative of impact is convincing and compelling:

*Tim has created a dynamic and welcoming classroom environment and the students enter the room each lesson ready to engage in their learning. He has addressed the needs of a diverse group of students including some who come with support, some who have low literacy skills, and some who are often disengaged from their learning because of a range of social and/or emotional issues. Tim has developed positive relationships and his friendly, caring, and professional manner has created a safe learning environment where students are prepared to take risks and openly engage in sharing their thoughts and ideas. He consistently gives feedback, validates and guides their learning, supports and encourages and this ensures that students can take their learning further. The students feel that Tim knows them. This has been an impressive demonstration of a teacher engaging in the work of teaching and learning to a high degree.*

There is a lesson here that in constructing a narrative of impact it is possible for supervising teachers to transcend the technocratic and instrumental language of some of the APST Graduate Standards and tell a persuasive story about a PST making a palpable difference in their school setting. The lesson is that a learner score on a pre- and post-test assessment criterion within a particular discipline and assessment task at the end of a sequence of lessons only constitutes a part of any narrative of impact. Impact is also

generated through relationships, an explicit commitment to inclusive practices and a deep appreciation of – and response to – social and emotional contexts of learning.

## Discussion

Hattie's (2009) key request to teachers and school principals was to have the mindset 'know thy impact', urging them to seek evidence of student responses to teachers' interventions and assessment tasks. In relation to helping PSTs think about evidencing the impact of their teaching on students' learning, the sample of intern teachers—with only two exceptions—received limited feedback. Importantly, the meaning of impact needs to be framed for supervising teachers, PSTs and other relevant stakeholders, even if this understanding is underpinned by multiple definitions.

This research found that supervising teachers struggled to apply and exemplify the language of impact. They tended to emphasise teaching inputs over learner outputs, perhaps because articulation of what constitutes good teaching has only recently begun to foreground the connection to evidence of impact on student outcomes (e.g., Chen, Mason, Staniszewski, Upton, & Valley 2012; Coe, Aloisi, Higgins, & Major, 2014; Hattie, 2012). The two areas suggested by research as providing the strongest evidence of impact on student outcomes are pedagogical content knowledge and high quality instruction, which include elements such as effective questioning and the creative and varied use of effective assessment strategies. It is not clear that all ITE partnerships consistently give an appropriate weighting to these two areas in the preparation of beginning teachers. The impact agenda remains in its infancy and requires greater sharing of perspectives and open discussions with supervising teachers - for most of them it is 'terra incognita'. The supervising teacher reports demonstrated that the language of impact is not something that they have been accustomed to deploying in their reviews/evaluations of the PSTs teaching performance. The evidence points to a need for closer briefing, guidance, and professional development in relation to the impact agenda in general, and how to provide evidence of impact in assessment feedback in particular.

Further, there is a research evidence base that in feeding back to PSTs, supervising teachers are more comfortable commenting upon teacher craft and input dimensions, as seen in the data reported here: dimensions related to classroom and behaviour management such as explanations, planning, presence, questioning, and observable relationships over more intangible learning related issues and output responses by students to teacher prompts and activities (Crasborn, Hennisson, Brouwer, Korthagen, & Bergen, 2011; Crutcher & Naseem, 2016; Ottesen, 2007). Standard 3 talks about planning for and implementing *effective* teaching (our emphasis). Only one supervising teacher in this sample chose to comment explicitly on PST effectiveness in promoting student learning. A shift towards supervising teachers drawing more of their conclusions about PST effectiveness from the quality of student learning outputs would represent a step forwards in the impact space.

The word impact is not used in the APST Graduate Standards. There is no trigger word or set of expectations related to "impact" for supervising teachers to respond to. Impact is implicit in several of the teacher standards (notably 3.6 and 5.4) but it is not surprising that supervising teachers do not use the word impact or look to provide explicit evidence of impact when they have not been asked to do so and the scaffolding and prompts in the impact space are unclear. Moreover, until very recently, PSTs are also unlikely to prompt the supervising teacher to talk about impact. The language of impact has not yet been threaded through their university training programmes from start to finish. The language of impact is a relatively recent arrival on the pedagogic scene in ITE. PSTs do not yet know that they are

supposed to be scoring impact goals – indeed the goalposts have only just started to be erected.

The findings therefore reveal a lack of precision and specificity in assessment judgments by supervising teachers and little comment on pre-service teachers' promotion of learners' progression. Research indicates that many experienced and able classroom practitioners serving as supervising teachers lack confidence themselves in deploying data in their teaching—both in terms of analysing and learning lessons from prior assessment data and using data to draw conclusions about students' learning progress (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; Reeves, 2017). Hence, it is again understandable that it is hard to find any substantial discussion about PSTs engagement with standard 5.4 (Demonstrate the capacity to interpret student assessment data to evaluate student learning). Neither the supervising teacher nor the PST seemed to be confident in this area so it tended to be sidelined and quietly ignored. When impact was discussed in the data reported above, it was mostly in relation to the qualitative aspects of impact. Few supervising teachers commented on Standard 5.4 and the PSTs were generally assessed resolutely at the “demonstrating” competence not “exceeding” level for this standard when they were achieving the highest assessment judgment across most of the other standards.

The relationship between supervising teachers and PSTs is a crucial one in the development of high quality beginning teachers. School-based supervising teachers influence significantly the professional development of PSTs (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2014; Izadinia, 2015; Rozelle & Wilson, 2012). Accordingly, the language of impact needs to resonate with supervising teachers for it to also resonate with PSTs. Relationships depend upon common shared values, principles, and understandings of what constitute the essential and fundamental components of professional practice. Importantly, all of these elements build trust (Stanulis & Russell, 2000). As universities and ITE partnerships strive to enact the TEMAG vision of clinical practice—for good professional and accreditation-related reasons—some of the long-standing expectations of professional experience are changing, particularly in relation to assessing the impact of PSTs' practice (Sloan, Blazeovski Rockman et al., 2015).

The rapid introduction of TPAs in Australian ITE has the potential to contribute positively to the impact agenda, given that the focus of these summative assessment instruments is upon evidencing PST practice and the inherent impact on student learning. Equally, this rapid introduction also has the potential to exacerbate the disparity between supervising teachers' conceptions of PST impact and how this is conceptualised at a policy level. Policy interventions such as TPAs are underpinned by specific and intended outcomes, like increasing PSTs impact on student learning. While the evidence base for how TPAs are contributing to this agenda is not yet established, the pivotal role of supervising teachers to support this work is clear (Kissau, Hart & Algozzine, 2017), as are their overall contributions to PST preparation (Gareis & Grant, 2014).

Supporting both supervising teachers and PSTs in navigating the impact agenda and implementing new expectations of the evidencing of impact, including the introduction of TPAs, will require regular and ongoing professional conversations among ITE stakeholders, and should be a focus of professional development for those involved directly. The research evidence indicates that limited ongoing communication among participants in ITE can serve to increase the disconnection that PSTs face between the in-field and university-based components of their learning programmes (Allen & Peach, 2007). Equally, disconnection among stakeholders serves to disrupt attempts at strengthening outcomes of ITE. Nevertheless, the impact imperative may encourage ITE partnerships to think beyond minor compliance adjustments and tweaks to their programmes towards engaging in more substantial re-imagining and innovative programme renewal (Guha et al., 2017; Ball &

Forzani, 2009; Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009). ITE providers have an important role to undertake in ensuring that the impact “script” is commonly understood by all stakeholders – PSTs, supervising teachers, Principals, Departments of Education, and all academic Faculty members contributing to ITE programmes.

All aspects of documentation and practice in terms of PSTs’ lived ITE experience need to align with the language of impact and this needs to be articulated across different features of programmes. For example, impact should be foregrounded as a central concept at the point of programme entry and orientation. Impact needs to be presented and articulated within and across professional studies and disciplinary units. Impact should also influence the construction of critical tasks aimed at evidencing teacher knowledge, practice and engagement within professional experience placements. Impact needs to be identified and explained explicitly for PSTs, supervising teachers, and academic staff within assessment documents, handbooks and supporting materials. In these ways, the language of impact can become embedded within the everyday practice of schools and classroom teachers and feature as a natural part of conversations about PST preparation, progress, and achievement. A consequence of these changes being implemented might be that ideas about impact effect the practice of in-service teachers in positive ways and contribute to the role they have to play in raising learners’ attainment. For the moment, conceptualising fully the notion of impact and building a shared understanding of the language of impact—and how to capture and evidence impact—remain works in progress.

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