

EFFECTIVE PRACTICA *for* EDUCATORS

EXPANDING OUR
NOTION OF THE
PRACTICUM
TO EFFECTIVELY
PREPARE CANADA'S
NEXT GENERATION
OF EDUCATORS

A position statement of the
ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN DEANS OF EDUCATION



Preamble

For some time, deans of education in Canada have discussed what conditions need to exist to better prepare pre-service educators to work in an increasingly diverse and globalized world. We began with a focus on the value of international practicum placements and at that time, discovered that policies regarding these vary greatly across jurisdictions. The discussion expanded more broadly into how alternative settings such as out-of-province schools, First Nations schools, resource programs, adult education centres, community-based programs, museums, science centres, hospitals and art galleries provide rich environments for pre-service educators' to experience effective teaching and learning. Policies regarding practicum, especially as they relate to provincial licensing, also vary across jurisdictions – in some provinces, placements outside of K-12 public schools are permitted and, in others, there appears to be no willingness to consider them.

Participating deans agreed that in order to prepare pre-service educators effectively for the realities of educating in a variety of settings, we need to expand our notions of what constitutes a practicum. In hopes of supporting full labour mobility across Canada, and beyond, we believe these statements will help those helping to prepare educators move beyond that which has considered foundational in pre-service education to that which has now become essential in order to expand horizons, understandings, awareness, and opportunities. We identified five overarching principles that provide a backdrop for the kind of expanded experiences we envision.

These principles are *Diversity, Indigeneity, Community, Mobility, and Internationalization*.

1. In exploring *Diversity*, pre-service educators should be encouraged to work with non-classroom based educators (i.e., educators who work in resource, special education, who are clinicians, etc.) who provide essential support for classroom educators as they work with increasingly diverse students;
2. In increasing an awareness about *Indigeneity*, pre-service educators should be enabled to work in Indigenous settings with students, communities and Elders including urban, rural, or northern settings;
3. In developing a sense of *Community*, pre-service educators should be provided with opportunities to build relationships within community-based settings including social service agencies, museums, science centres, art galleries, and alternative adult education centres;

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4. The principle of *Mobility* suggests pre-service educators should consider completing a portion of their practicum in other provinces/territories/nations if suitable arrangements can be made; and finally,
5. By encouraging *Internationalization*, we intend for pre-service educators to be encouraged to not only complete a portion of their practicum in international contexts but also increase their awareness of international settings, school systems, curriculum, and the expectations of educators are different from the Canadian context.

Why do we think these kinds of experiences are important?

NON-CLASSROOM EDUCATORS

Within current educational contexts, when educators are expected to teach in diverse and differentiated ways, they need to be able to understand and appreciate the important roles non-classroom educators play in supporting students in schools.

INDIGENOUS CONTEXTS

Within current educational contexts, educators are expected to have a greater understanding of Indigenous cultures, worldviews and ways of knowing if they are to be able to support Indigenous students' academic growth. A greater understanding on the part of educators will also lead to their non-indigenous students increasing their awareness and understanding of Indigenous cultures, worldviews and ways of knowing.

COMMUNITY-BASED SETTINGS

Educators are expected to acknowledge the importance of context and know how to access community resources, so we should encourage pre-service educators to work with community groups and organizations in non-traditional settings as part of their practicum experience.

OUT OF PROVINCE PLACEMENTS

Canadian educators can benefit from greater inter-provincial/territorial mobility than they did in the past, so it only makes sense that, when suitable arrangements can be made, pre-service educators wishing to complete part of their practicum in another province or territory be permitted and even encouraged to do so.

INTERNATIONAL PLACEMENTS

We want educators to be globally-minded, therefore we need to find opportunities for pre-service educators to be able to experience placements in different geographic and socio-cultural contexts and within alternative educational systems. This can enable pre-service educators to develop an awareness for how international contexts compare with education in Canada.

Conclusions and recommendations

This ACDE position statement seeks to raise awareness of issues currently restricting the practicum experience of pre-service educators in Canada. ACDE's view urges the removal of restrictions including those that limit pre-service educators to one province only and to K-12 public schools specifically. There is value in expanding our notions of the practicum, providing pre-service educators with more diverse opportunities, and preparing them more broadly for their educational roles both within the K-12 public system and those roles that go well beyond. Broadening the scope of what we have permitted in the past, and opening up opportunities for pre-service educators to be exposed to innovative practices in a variety of educational settings, will more effectively prepare Canada's next generation of educators.

FOR FURTHER READING:

Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE). (2006b). *Accord on initial educator education*. Vancouver, BC: ACDE.

Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE). (2010a). *Accord on Indigenous education*. Vancouver, BC: ACDE.

Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE). (2013). *Accord on the internationalization of education*. Vancouver, BC: ACDE.

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