CLINICAL EDUCATION: AN INVESTIGATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROCESSES — THE APPLICATION OF STUDENT-CENTRED EDUCATION AND CLIENT-CENTRED CARE DURING UNDERGRADUATE PHYSIOTHERAPY CLINICAL PRACTICE

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A thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other University of Institution. The project was self-funded.

Keri Marie Moore

Date

Signed by
PRESENTATIONS MADE AT CONFERENCES

The annual conference of the *Australian and New Zealand Association of Medical Educators*. Launceston, Tasmania, Australia. June 2009.


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Translated from Irish:

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**DECLARATION**  
**PRESENTATIONS MADE AT CONFERENCES**  
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**  
**LIST OF FIGURES**  
**LIST OF TABLES**  
**LIST OF APPENDICES**  
**ABSTRACT**

## CHAPTER ONE  
INTRODUCING THE STUDY  
- The research milieu .................................................. 1  
- Significance of the study .............................................. 8  
- Terminology ............................................................. 9  
- Outline of the thesis .................................................. 11  
- The boundaries of the study ......................................... 11

## CHAPTER TWO  
EXPLORING THE NOTION OF ‘CLIENT-CENTRED CARE’ IN AUSTRALIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTICE  
- Introduction .................................................................. 15  
- The search strategy .................................................... 15  
- Health care in Australia: The government’s views ............ 16  
- Australian health care legislation and client-centred care ... 18  
- Higher education in the professional practice setting ....... 20  
- Australian physiotherapy education ............................... 24  
- The competencies expected of entry level physiotherapists ... 25  
- An overview of the Bachelor of Physiotherapy Program ...... 26  
- The broad aims of clinical education ............................... 28  
- The universal notion of client-centred care ...................... 31  
- Clients’ rights related to their health care ....................... 33  
- Clients’ views on being involved in clinical education ....... 37  
- Other legal complexities of clinical education .................. 39  
- Client involvement in student education ......................... 42  
- The nature of communications between the client and health science student ................................. 45  
- Summarising Chapter Two ............................................. 47

## CHAPTER THREE  
EXPLORING THE LITERATURE ON CLINICAL EDUCATION  
- Introduction ................................................................ 49  
- Section One: The nature of client, educator and student interactions ........................................ 50  
- Learning from the experience of clinical education .......... 53  
- The complex nature of experiential learning environments .................................................................. 57  
- Summary of Section One .............................................. 59  
- Section Two: Organisational frameworks for clinical supervision ................................................. 60  
- Supervision organised around the amount of contact between client and student interactions ....... 61  
- Summary of Section Two .............................................. 62  
- Section Three: The foci of clinical education ................. 63  
- Constructing knowledge ............................................... 64  
- Summary of Section Three ........................................... 68  
- Section Four: Clinical teaching strategies ..................... 69  
- Managing students’ fears and anxieties .......................... 74  
- Providing students with feedback ................................. 75  
- Students’ views on clinical teaching strategies ................ 77  
- Summary Section Four ................................................. 78  
- Section Five: The clinical educator ............................... 78  
- Teaching characteristics of clinical educators ............... 83  
- Summary of Section Five ............................................. 87  
- Identifying the gaps in the literature ............................. 87
CHAPTER FOUR
EXPLAINING THE METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND PROCESSES ADOPTED

Introduction
Researching in new ways
Clarifying my perspective with stakeholders
Explaining the choice of data collection tools
Interviews with faculty
Student and Clinical Educator Surveys
An Observation Audit Tool
Post-observation interviews with clients, educators and students
Describing the participants involved in the study cohort
Explaining the general approach taken to data analysis
Gaining ethical approval for the study
Gaining informed consent
The participants’ right to autonomy and voluntary participation
The participants’ right to anonymity and confidentiality
The participants’ right to be protected from harm and to provide informed consent
Describing the two parts of the study
Part One: Stage One
Interviews with faculty
Explaining the data analysis of Part One: Stage One
Part One: Stage Two
Explaining the structure of the students’ survey
Explaining the structure of the clinical educators’ survey
Recruitment of participants for the surveys in Part One: Stage Two
Explaining the steps in data analysis of the surveys in Part One: Stage Two
Part Two: Stage One
Explaining the structure of the Observation Audit Tool
Part Two: Stage Two
Explaining the nature of the client interviews
Explaining the nature of the clinical educator interviews
Explaining the nature of the student interviews
Recruitment of participants for the observations and interviews in Part Two
Explaining the steps in data analysis of the observations and interviews in Part Two
Collating the data to answer the research questions
The analysis of the application of student-centred education in physiotherapy clinical education
The analysis of the application of client-centred care in physiotherapy clinical education
Summarising Chapter Four
My reflections

CHAPTER FIVE
REPORTING THE FINDINGS AND RESULTS FROM PART ONE OF THE STUDY

Introduction
Reporting the findings of Part One: Stage One
Describing the perspectives of the two faculty members
Reporting on the results from Part One: Stage Two

Key findings from interviews with faculty
Participants in the survey
Describing the context of clinical education
The profile of the physiotherapy clinical educator
The students’ views on clinical education: What students valued and what they found difficult
Explaining the difficulties student have
Describing students’ views of their educators’ teaching characteristics
Describing the students’ views of feedback
Describing client and student interactions
Describing the timing and content of student and educator discussions
Comparative analysis of the students’ and educators’ responses
Comparative analysis of the students’ responses and their ‘wish list’
The most frequent items discussed by students and educators
A global view of clinical education
Summarising Chapter Five

Key findings from the student survey
Key findings from the clinical educators’ survey
Key findings from a comparison of the students’ and educators’ surveys
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Some of the drivers of health professional education ........................................ 28
Figure 2. Summarising the elements of contributions to the achievement of client-centred care .......... 48
Figure 3. The elements underpinning a client–student encounter ........................................ 51
Figure 4. Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle ......................................................................... 55
Figure 5. A conceptualisation of Kolb’s cycle by Smith and Irby (1997) .................................... 56
Figure 6. Moderators of an episode of client care .................................................................... 65
Figure 7. A concept map of the different parts of the research ................................................ 127
Figure 8. A concept map of the collation of data to give a snap-shot view of a clinical education setting .............................................................................................................. 170
Figure 9. Clinical Education: A 3-way dialogue and 6-Step framework ..................................... 272
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Makoul’s (2001) framework detailing effective practitioner–client communication........................................52
Table 2. An approach for clinical teaching .................................................................................................72
Table 3. The stages of bedside teaching, detailed ......................................................................................73
Table 4. The stages of bedside teaching, in brief .........................................................................................73
Table 5. The skills and knowledge of educative processes required of clinical educators........................................81
Table 6. Ineffective clinical educator behaviours .........................................................................................85
Table 7. Enabling and effective clinical educator behaviours ........................................................................86
Table 8. Chronology of studies into various aspects of clinical education ..................................................96
Table 9. The alignment between the gaps identified from the literature review, questions asked in the study and data collection tools. ......................................................................................................126
Table 10. Details of participants ................................................................................................................137
Table 11. The Mean of the scores of the educator report regarding seeking informed consent. ......................138
Table 12. The clinical educators’ professional development activities ..............................................................139
Table 13. The number of students experiencing difficulties in different clinical education settings. .................142
Table 14. The rank means of the students’ reports on educators’ teaching behaviours ..................................146
Table 15. The mean of the students’ response about clinical educators’ teaching behaviours from different clinical settings .................................................................147
Table 16. The mean scores, students’ views on feedback. .................................................................................148
Table 17. The students’ reports on the frequency with which they asked the client for feedback in different settings. .....................................................................................................................149
Table 18. The means of the students’ responses of the timing of their discussions with their educators. ............151
Table 19. The means of the educators’ responses related to the timing of their discussions with students. .......152
Table 20. The Mean of the scores from the students’ responses about the content of their discussions with educators. .....................................................................................................................153
Table 21. The Mean of the scores from the educators’ responses about the content of their discussions with students. .....................................................................................................................155
Table 22. The sub-items within the themes discussed the least between students and educators. .......................159
Table 23. The means of the students’ ‘wish list’ for topics and sub-items of discussion .....................................160
Table 24. The means of the topic areas discussed by students and educators. ..................................................163
Table 25. The means and standard deviations of the sub-items within each topic discussed by students and educators. ..................................................................................................................164
Table 26. A comparison of students’ reports of current topics of discussion with their ‘wish list’ of topics. ............165
Table 27. A comparison of students’ reports of current topics of discussion with their ‘wish list’, including sub-items within each topic. .........................................................................................166
Table 28. The comparison of the Top 10 sub-items discussed between students and educators. ......................168
Table 29. The numerical summary of the educational effectiveness of the four clinical education settings. ..........172
Table 30. The clinical educators’ topics of discussion with the client and student during scenarios of clinical education in Private Practices. ........................................................................................................180
Table 31. The clinical educators’ topics of discussion with the client and student during scenarios of clinical education in Public Hospitals. .................................................................................................182
Table 32. The comparison of survey and observation data from Private Practice regarding the least discussed items. ..............................................................................................................................183
Table 33. The comparison of survey and observation data from Public Hospitals regarding the least discussed items. ..............................................................................................................................183
Table 34. A global summary of the nature of students’ and educators’ dialogue. ..............................................185
Table 35. The summary of client, educator and student interaction during the consultations observed. .............187
Table 36. Summary of the observed models of supervision, the students’ ratios and roles. ...............................190
LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix One: Letter of Ethics Approval for the Research, 22nd September, 2003 ........................................... 294
Appendix Two: Letter of Approval for variation, 27th March, 2006. .............................................................. 295
Appendix Three: Sample of the two stages of qualitative analysis of data ...................................................... 296
Appendix Four: Interview questions for faculty .......................................................................................... 299
Appendix Five: Students’ survey about the clinical education setting ....................................................... 300
Appendix Six: Clinical educators’ survey about the clinical education setting ........................................ 304
Appendix Seven: Observation Audit Tool [OAT] ......................................................................................... 307
Appendix Eight: Client interview schedule ............................................................................................... 311
Appendix Nine: Clinical educator interview schedule ............................................................................... 313
Appendix Ten: Student interview schedule ............................................................................................... 314
Appendix Eleven: Participant information statement for the client regarding observation and interview about their consultation ................................................................. 315
Appendix Twelve: Consent form — for client observation during clinical teaching and subsequent interview ........................................................................................................ 317
ABSTRACT

The literature regarding clinical education strategies, that simultaneously meet both the student's and the client's needs, is limited. The purpose of this research was to identify features of clinical education processes that epitomize student-centred education and client-centred care.

The literature explored the concepts of undergraduate clinical education and the need for health practitioners to be client-centred. Focusing on physiotherapy pre-professional education in ambulatory care settings, a mixed method approach using surveys, observation and interviews was used within the analytical and interpretive paradigm of research. The participants were the students, clinical educators and their clients for whom care was provided.

It was found that while physiotherapy clinical educators say they have time to participate in professional development in clinical education, they often only attend a one-day workshop. Only in those working in private clinics thought they were underpaid. They all believe, they are well informed, supported by the university.

Students report educators display high-quality teaching behaviours. Educators match their style of supervision and teaching strategies to their perception of the students' learning needs and the clients' health care needs. There was no association between the model of supervision and the client-centredness of the consultation, or the dialogue and feedback between the student and the educator. The management of the education and health care scenario is dependent on the expertise of the educator.

Clients, in the main, are satisfied that clinical education events do meet their expectations and health care needs and they have a positive attitude toward participation in physiotherapy clinical education. Their willingness to participate is balanced with a sense of altruism and self-centeredness.

Some clients edit the feedback they offer students, with the idea that their genuine thoughts might negatively affect the students' learning. If this is not checked in the normal course of management of clinical education, it is possible that students might develop a false sense of how their activities actually affect clients. Thus the student may develop a false sense of their skills and abilities.

The findings suggest strengthening the clinical educator's deeper knowledge of education, particularly around models and theories, might enhance clinical education outcomes because there is a disparity between what students and educators reported regarding the timing of their discussions about episodes of client care. Further, the students' perceptions are totally different from the educators' regarding which particular topics they discuss. There is a clear need to strengthen the alignment between students' learning needs and educators' foci of discussion – to raise awareness of the importance of de-briefing as an opportunity for promoting deeper reflection on learning. Also, to be more explicit about the active nature of the client's role in the learning event and to emphasise student–educator discussions about how the client can contribute to the management of the client’s self-care. Such discussion ought to build on the student’s previous knowledge in an effort to provide opportunities to construct learning from prior experience.

Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle was proposed as a model to critique contemporary clinical teaching practices, but in a way that included the third party (the client) in consideration of any clinical education event. Consequently, Kolb’s model was extended to include the client’s voice in the experiential learning processes, through processes involved in obtaining consent and post-consultation evaluation of the clients’ experience of the clinical education event. Given that the Australian Physiotherapy Council (2006; 2009) advocates for entry level health professionals to be client-centred, this emerging educational framework adds to current approaches on the management of professional practice experiences. It has the potential to significantly inform and impact on the student’s development of a client-centred approach to clinical practice.