A&H

From practice to pedagogy: A model of praxis-focused creative arts assessment in initial teacher education

Katie Burke [iD]
University of Southern Queensland, Australia

David Roy [iD]
University of Newcastle, Australia

William Baker [iD]
University of Tasmania, Australia

Sian Chapman [iD]
Murdoch University, Australia

Katie Hotko [iD]
Southern Cross University, Australia

Amy Hamilton [iD]
Flinders University, Australia

Abstract
In response to the growing need for authentic, pedagogically sound assessment in Initial Teacher Education (ITE), this study presents a model of praxis-focused Creative Arts assessment designed to integrate arts-making, critical reflection, and pedagogical theorising. Drawing on a multi-site, collaborative autoethnographic study involving six Australian universities, the research uses document analysis and thematic analysis of student survey data to identify critical characteristics that underpin effective praxis-focused assessment: meaningful context, embodied arts engagement, and critical reflection, which collectively contribute to theory-practice integration. The study results in

Corresponding author:
Katie Burke, School of Education and Creative Arts, University of Southern Queensland, West Street, Toowoomba, QLD 4350, Australia.
Email: katie.burke@unisq.edu.au

a theoretically grounded and empirically supported model of praxis-focused assessment that is affirmed as a pedagogical tool for preparing confident, competent arts educators. The model offers a framework for assessment in Creative Arts ITE, enhancing student engagement and classroom readiness while addressing contemporary challenges such as generative AI and online learning.

Keywords
Creative arts, arts assessment, initial teacher education, praxis-focused assessment, authentic arts

Introduction

Educational experts and arts practitioners agree that embodied, active, and sensory learning is the most potent way to experience the Creative Arts: Dance, Drama/Theatre, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts (hereafter, "arts") (Dinham, 2023; Ewing, 2010). In teacher education, it is repeatedly affirmed that Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students can most effectively prepare to teach the Arts in their future role as generalist classroom teachers through embodied experience of aesthetic, creative, and artistic practices (Cutcher and Cook, 2016). However, while the value of physically engaging in arts experiences are vital, such experiences alone are insufficient preparation for the re-quirements of arts teaching (Goetz and Zwin, 2010). Not only should ITE students be given the opportunity to engage in embodied arts making experiences, but to explicitly cultivate their skills as educators through developing their pedagogical content knowl-edge (Berry et al., 2016). Within arts education, this theory-practice nexus is referred to as "arts praxis". Through engagement in arts praxis, ITE students can gain first-hand ex-perience of arts practices and reflect on arts pedagogies in practice. This process is promoted to equip ITE students to more effectively support their future students' artistic development (Burke, 2021) and is considered a crucial element of ITE learning that is fundamental to the preparation of classroom arts teachers (Burke et al., 2023; Cutcher and Cook, 2016; Ewing and Gibson, 2015).

The development and delivery of ITE programs face a number of challenges to ensure ITE students are adequately prepared to teach the Arts effectively. Beyond the first challenge of the well-documented limited arts learning offered to generalist teachers in their ITE training (Chapman et al., 2019; Joseph et al., 2025), is the increasing concern in Higher Education (HE) of less-than satisfactory student engagement with core course content (Tight, 2020). Some studies reveal that time-poor modern students are making choices to approach their learning strategically, focusing their efforts on tasks that directly contribute to summative assessment, and considering other learning tasks as optional (Harris et al., 2018; Julsar et al., 2023). Given the significant value that tertiary arts educators place on practical learning tasks through which arts concepts and pedagogy are best understood, this propensity for students to give time and attention only to what is assessed has been strategically harnessed by some arts educators by embedding praxial

arts experiences in assessment tasks (that is, arts making and critical reflection), (Burke et al., 2023; Leduc, 2021). In doing so, they are attempting to ensure that all students engage in active learning and pedagogical reflection. The approach, referred to as praxis-focused assessment (Burke et al., 2023), stems from constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2020), whose advocates assert that learning activities, intended learning outcomes and assessment tasks are all directly aligned.

The members of the research team teach arts ITE courses/units (hereafter "courses") across six Australian universities, inclusive of all five Arts subjects in the Australian Curriculum. All employ an approach to assessment we individually identify as praxis-focused assessment. This is based upon our shared belief that the approach is the most ideal means to engage our students in both relevant theory and practice to prepare them to teach the Arts in their future classrooms. While an initial definition of praxis-focused assessment has been proposed by Burke et al. (2023), the critical characteristics of praxis-focused assessment are not yet clearly articulated and broader empirical support for its pedagogical impact remains limited. This paper addresses that gap by investigating the assessment strategies we independently describe as praxis-focused assessment. We asked: *What explicitly constitutes praxis-focused arts assessment, and does such an approach meaningfully benefit students' readiness to teach the Arts as future generalist educators?*

The study results in a model of praxis-focused assessment. The model identifies critical characteristics that underpin effective praxis-focused assessment: meaningful context, embodied arts engagement, and critical reflection, which collectively contribute to theory-practice integration. These characteristics are collectively shown to support the development of both artist and teacher identity, enhance student engagement, and foster classroom readiness.

By synthesising curriculum documentation and student survey data, this study offers a theoretically grounded and empirically supported model for praxis-focused assessment in Creative Arts ITE; an approach that, to date, has previously been widely used but under theorised. The model, "Critical Characteristics of Praxis-Focused Assessment in Creative Arts Teacher Education," is offered as a framework to guide future assessment design that integrates arts theory, practice and reflection.

Conceptual and practical foundations

The concept of "praxis" refers to the process by which learning is enacted, practiced embodied or realised. It is more than merely action, it is thoughtful, reflective action that is informed by theory and aimed at social transformation or improvement. While practice can be routine or mechanical, praxis implies conscious, purposeful action aimed at social transformation or improvement (Aristotle c.4th century BCE; Freire, 1993; Kemmis, 2022). Freire defined it as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (1993: 33). He proposed that, through thoughtful and critical reflection on action, individuals attain deeper understanding and meaningful connections between theory and practice, leading to transformative understanding and future application. In the context of arts education, arts praxis is understood as the interplay between embodied arts practices in which learners experience aesthetic, creative and artistic practices, and critical

reflection upon these practices to deepen awareness of arts theory. In the ITE domain this critical reflection also includes pedagogical reflection in and on embodied arts experiences to gain actionable insights for the arts classroom. This view aligns with Maras and Shand's (2023) assertion that critical and creative thinking in art education is not an add-on capability but a form of making, embedded in reasoning and theory building within domain-specific constraints. By engaging ITE students in arts praxis, the intention is to raise their critical consciousness regarding the transformative potential of the Arts, equipping them with resources to be pedagogically innovative and authentic (Cain et al., 2024), while navigating the changing curriculum landscapes (Chapman and Wright, 2024).

An additional concept that is often coupled with the centrality of arts praxis in ITE is that of "authentic arts". According to Dinham (2023), in school-based education, this represents a meaningful arts learning program that fosters children's creativity, aesthetic awareness, and self-expression through artistic mediums from a range of cultural backgrounds. In the context of arts learning within ITE, authentic practice is therefore embodied, active, and sensory, necessitating active participation in artistic experiences relevant to the 'real' world of the Arts (Roy et al., 2025). The concepts of authentic arts learning and arts praxis are thus central to the focus of arts educators in preparing future classroom educators (Burke et al., 2024; Cain et al., 2024; Dinham 2023).

Praxis-focused assessment has been promoted as one means to engage ITE students in authentic arts learning and critical pedagogical reflection for classroom readiness. This has been defined as "the assessment of core learning experiences that require students to engage in hands-on activities and subsequent critical reflections to achieve targeted learning outcomes" (Burke and Fanshawe, 2021: 92). In arts education, it has been found particularly beneficial in focusing student learning by mandating arts praxis through targeted assessment tasks. The approach has been explored in a small number of ITE research projects (Allen et al., 2014; Davis, 2018; Lierse, 2015; Moore and Baker, 2019) and involves embedding practical arts activities and reflection tasks in weekly learning, which directly contribute to assessment. Burke et al. (2023) assert the mandatory nature of assessing practical learning is a key success factor of the strategy, indicating that students acknowledge a greater motivation and engagement in both the practical tasks and critical reflections because these contribute to a grade. They further found this strategy increased students' sense of confidence for the future arts classroom with both practical insights and pedagogical reasoning upon which to expand their practice in the future. While these studies are focused on the use of praxis-focused assessment to engage online learners, its value for all arts learning in ITE, regardless of the student's mode of enrolment, is acknowledged as a means to ensure students gain the benefits of authentic arts praxis.

This is considered important, given research that indicates generalist primary teachers often lack confidence and a background in teaching the Arts (Russell-Bowie, 2010), or a lack of preparedness for graduate teachers in the Arts (Collins, 2016; Lindsay, 2021; Lummis et al., 2014). However, studies show that targeted courses that include immersive arts practice and opportunities for practical application can significantly increase confidence and attitudes towards the Arts (Deehan et al., 2022). Embedding these experiences

in assessment tasks consequently requires that all students engage in these experiences, with the aim that they obtain the attendant benefits of embodied learning.

There are additional reasons why praxis-focused assessment may pose an important pedagogical approach. In particular, the rise of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) presents new challenges, especially in maintaining academic integrity and authenticity in student assessment. With freely available GenAI tools that can generate essays, lesson plans, images and creative content, it is vitally important that higher educators develop approaches to assessment that provide greater assurance that learners have genuinely developed the target knowledge and skills (Villarroel et al., 2017). In the context of arts ITE learning, this means that assessment should ensure students are demonstrating readiness to teach the Arts in the classroom, which necessitates the ability to enact arts practices, supported by a theoretical and pedagogical understanding of good arts practice (Ewing and Gibson, 2015).

Arts ITE provides an ideal opportunity for assessment approaches that reflect real-world teaching and creative processes. Authentic, performance-based tasks—such as studio work, live facilitation, and reflective practice—can support this goal. Further, it may have some potential to reduce opportunities for academic dishonesty, although it is noted that implementation requires careful design and implementation to address this requirement effectively (Fawns et al., 2024). Balancing technological change with the pedagogical integrity of arts learning in ITE remains essential to preparing teachers who can navigate and model responsible creativity in AI-enhanced classrooms. Praxis-focused assessment is one means promoted as a pedagogical approach that ensures all learners engage in such authentic arts processes.

The literature thus shows that praxis-focused assessment poses a positive assessment approach that addresses a number of modern challenges experienced by arts educators in ITE, however the literature is limited in both depth and scope. In particular, a theoretical grounding or empirical consensus on what constitutes the critical characteristics of this assessment approach is yet to be completed, with most understanding of the approach emerging from bespoke, single case study projects arising from one or a small number of institutions. Given the evolving challenges of academic integrity, digital delivery and curriculum pressures in higher education, further investigation is necessary. This study responds to this call.

Materials and methods

This paper arises from a larger project which aims to gain empirical insight into the characteristics of "authentic" assessment in the Arts in Australian generalist primary ITE degrees with a view that this will lead to more effective learning and teaching practice. The researchers represent a national collective of arts educators from six universities who scrutinised our assessment practices and related learning and teaching approaches, alongside student perspectives of our approaches to assessment. While our contexts varied, we each claimed to implement "praxis-focused assessment", wherein we required our students to create various arts artefacts and reflect on this through the lens of arts

theory, curriculum, and pedagogical intent. The goal of this multi-site study was not to compare the effectiveness of assessment across cases, but to investigate what explicitly constitutes praxis-focused arts assessment, and whether such an approach meaningfully benefits students' readiness to teach the Arts as future generalist educators. Ethical clearance was provided by the University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics Committee in March 2024 (Project ID: 30245).

Research design

The overarching project used a Collaborative Autoethnographic approach (CAE) (Chang, 2022) to explore our practices and assessment approach. CAE is a valid research tool as it recognises "personal experiences as a valuable source for societal understanding" (Chang, 2022: 139). In allowing researchers to critically interrogate their own practices while co-constructing meaning in dialogue with peers (Chang, 2022), an autoethnographic approach has the capacity to enhance both reflexivity and trustworthiness of the findings (Koopman et al., 2020). Within teacher education research, CAE is particularly valuable because it positions educators as both practitioners and researchers, enabling authentic insights into the pedagogical choices and assessment designs that shape pre-service teacher learning. Through this, we acknowledged the inherent subjectivity of our experience as researchers deeply involved in the data, and as both participants and researchers, we therefore followed the principles of CAE to iteratively reflect and challenge our assumptions. This approach supports credibility through researcher reflexivity and dependability through collective validation of interpretations, consistent with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research.

The portion of the overall study reported in this paper employed a multi-method qualitative research design that incorporated a document analysis of our course specifications and assessment tasks, and a student survey with quantitative and qualitative questions.

Participants

Participants in this study included each of the authors who are active arts educators within teacher education, and students in our cohorts during 2024 who responded to a voluntary online survey. Table 1 indicates the different contexts of the research team.

A total of 126 student responses were received for the online survey, with 101 complete responses. Table 2 presents the number of student responses across institutions.

For three open-ended survey questions, response rates were 83, 72, and 53 respectively.

The vast majority of respondents indicated they were enrolled in a Bachelor of Education degree ($n = 86$), with the remainder in an undergraduate Associate Degree ($n = 10$), Masters of Teaching degree ($n = 1$), or other higher education program taking the course as an elective ($n = 4$). This meant that the vast majority of students were training to be classroom teachers.

Table 1. Researcher contexts.

University	Approximate cohort size	On-campus %	Online %	Programmatic context	Arts areas taught
1.	310 students	39	61	Early childhood and primary	Dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts
2.	400 students	100	0	Early childhood and primary	Dance, drama, music and visual arts
3.	240 students	25	75	Primary	Music; visual art
4.	182 students	70	30	Primary	Dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts
5.	240 students	100	0	Primary	Dance, drama, music, media arts and visual arts
6.	400 students	29	71	Primary	Dance, drama, music and visual arts

Table 2. Number of student responses per institution.

University	Count
University 1	20
University 2	24
University 3	25
University 4	11
University 5	16
University 6	3
Not indicated	2
Total	101

Table 3. Respondent ages.

Age	Count
18–24 years old	52
25–34 years old	17
35–44 years old	25
45–54 years old	7
55 and older	0
Total	101

As seen in Table 3, most respondents were between the ages of 18 and 24, with the remainder being between 25 and 54 years old.

The majority of students indicated they were enrolled on campus ($n = 52$), followed by online ($n = 43$), and a small number were undertaking blended study with some online and

some on-campus study ($n = 6$). When conducting the analysis, we noted there were no discernible differences in students' responses across any relevant demographic characteristics.

Research instruments

Two instruments were used in this study: a document analysis template used to collect our reflections and analysis as arts teacher educators of our various course specifications and assessment tasks, and a voluntary anonymous student survey from students in our cohorts during 2024. Using both document analysis and a student survey enabled methodological triangulation, strengthening the credibility and robustness of the study. Document analysis offered a critical evaluation of the intended curriculum and assessment design, while the survey provided access to students' subjective experiences and perceptions. The combination of these methods ensured that the study examined praxis-focused assessment both as it was formally constructed and as it was lived in practice. As Patton (2015) emphasises, integrating diverse data sources strengthens the trustworthiness of qualitative findings. Significantly, this work contributed to the overall ongoing project titled "Arts education, assessment and ITE degrees in Australian Higher Education" by connecting student and academic voice on the characteristics of authentic praxis focus assessment.

Data collection

For the document analysis, each of the six academics conducting this study provided assessment and course documentation regarding arts ITE courses with which we were directly involved. These were distributed to different members of the group who completed an audit guided by a structured template based on two well-established frameworks: Herrington and Oliver's (2000) model for authentic learning environments and Dinham's (2023) arts-specific processes. These frameworks provided consistent criteria

Table 4. Complementary frameworks used for document analysis.

Herrington and Oliver's (2000) instructional design framework for authentic learning environments	Dinham's (2023) features authentic arts learning.
• Authentic contexts • Authentic tasks • Expert demonstration • Diverse viewpoints • Collaboration • Reflection • Expression of understanding • Support structures • Authentic evaluation	• Invent – Create designs that express ideas and intentions. • Make – Craft and present artworks using arts language, concepts and processes. • Reflect – Critically evaluate your own and others' ideas, processes and artworks. • Connect – Link artmaking to cultural expression and diverse traditions.

for documenting and subsequently evaluating assessment design across institutions (see Table 4). Herrington and Oliver's framework identifies nine characteristics of authentic learning environments that are critical dimensions for preparing students for real-world contexts and offered a robust structure for evaluating the broader pedagogical integrity of assessment design. Dinham's arts-specific model then ensured our audit process was grounded in arts-specific values, capturing the embodied, process-oriented and socially connected nature of creative practice. By using these two frameworks in a complementary manner, we ensured that the tasks authentically reflected the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for effective arts teaching. Herrington and Oliver's criteria provided a robust structure for evaluating the pedagogical integrity of assessment design, while Dinham's model grounded the analysis in discipline-specific authenticity. This dual-framework approach ensured that the assessments were not only theoretically sound but also representative of real-world arts education practices, thereby strengthening the credibility and dependability of our findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). These features of both frameworks were used to establish a document analysis template to guide the document analysis process (See Appendix A).

Additionally, students in each participating academic's courses were invited to respond to a short voluntary survey via email or online learning platforms associated with their coursework to complete a Qualtrics survey during their final week of learning (See Appendix B for survey instrument). The survey collected a small degree of demographic data, alongside three Likert-scale items which were developed to align with the core components of praxis-focused assessment. Further, to enhance credibility, open-ended questions were included to allow students to elaborate on their Likert-scale responses, supporting richer interpretation. The use of both document analysis and student survey data enabled methodological triangulation, which strengthens the internal consistency and trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Survey participation was voluntary, and written informed consent was obtained prior to data collection.

The survey asked students three questions using a Likert scale from unimportant to extremely important, regarding the importance of certain aspects of assessment design to their learning and future practice. These questions were:

(1) As part of your arts education assessment/s you are required to engage in practical arts making (e.g. making visual arts, performing, composing etc). How important do you believe this practical engagement is for your preparation as a teacher of the Arts in the classroom?

(2) As part of your arts education assessment/s you are required to critically reflect on your practical arts making. How important is this reflective process for your preparation as a teacher of the Arts in the classroom?

(3) As part of your arts education assessment/s you are required to make connections between your practical arts making experiences, your pedagogical experience and theoretical learning. How important is the requirement to make these connections to your preparation as a teacher of the Arts in the classroom?

Data analysis

Data analysis involved a two-pronged qualitative analysis of both curriculum documents and student survey responses. This dual approach enabled us to examine the intended design of assessment tasks alongside students' lived experiences of those tasks. The document analysis involved comparing similarities and differences across the six institutions to identify recurring pedagogical patterns and distinctive practices. This interpretive process enabled the synthesis of shared characteristics, which were then organised and reported thematically in the findings.

In analysing the student survey data, quantitative survey items were analysed descriptively to establish the proportion of students who rated particular aspects of praxis-focused assessment as important or very important. For the open-ended survey responses, thematic analysis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's (2022) six phases to ensure a systematic and transparent approach to coding and theme development, enhancing the dependability of the findings. In the familiarisation stage, responses were read and re-read to gain an overview of the dataset. During coding, initial codes were created to capture meaningful units of data. For example, one student wrote: *"At first I felt nervous about performing, but by the end I realised it made me more confident to teach it"*. This was coded as *"overcoming nervousness"* and *"confidence building."* Another student commented: *"The reflection task made me think about how to connect my teaching choices with curriculum aims."* This was coded as *"reflection as linking practice to theory."* In the searching for themes phase, these codes were collated into broader candidate themes. For example, *"overcoming nervousness"* and *"confidence building"* were grouped under the theme *Building confidence and competence*. Similarly, *"reflection as linking practice to theory"* was combined with other codes such as *"reflection clarifies pedagogy"* under the theme *Theory–practice integration*. Themes were then refined and named in later phases of the analysis, resulting in four key themes: *learning through doing, confidence and competence, the power of reflection,* and *theory–practice integration*.

Methodological triangulation between document analysis and student survey data further supported credibility and internal consistency (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Together, these complementary analyses provided insight into both the intended design of praxis-focused assessment and the ways students experienced and interpreted those designs.

Findings

Document analysis

Analysis of the curriculum documents broadly confirmed the presence of praxis-focused assessment structures, meaning that all six reviewed courses demonstrated a clear commitment to providing students with authentic artistic and pedagogical experiences. Assessments typically required students to engage as both creators (artists) and planners (teachers), thereby reflecting the dual identity expected of arts educators. For example, students were required to create art portfolios across the various art forms, accompanied by reflections on their own artistic process and pedagogical suggestions for applying this

in a classroom; compose short musical pieces and reflect on their pedagogical intent, or facilitate drama workshops with peers and submit critical commentaries linking their practice to curriculum outcomes. These tasks exemplify the integration of arts-making, pedagogical planning, and reflective theorising central to praxis-focused assessment. All courses also provided activities that reflected real-world classroom application. In some cases, students were explicitly asked to consider how they might adapt their own arts practice to suit diverse primary or early childhood learners. Thus, assessment was not separate from teaching practice but a rehearsal and enactment of it—an essential principle of praxis.

Five of the six courses were found to explicitly promote critical reflection and link students' experiences to educational theory. Assessment rubrics and learning outcomes consistently encouraged students to reflect on their creative decisions, teaching choices, and engage with scholarly literature. Reflective tasks included structured journals, analytical rationales, or critical commentaries on classroom planning. These tasks were focused on promoting metacognitive awareness thus supporting the development of explicit theorising about arts pedagogy. Reviewers noted that assessment tasks supported student reflection on arts practice and theory, often in relation to broader understandings of curriculum and pedagogy.

Three of the six courses explicitly indicated the embedding of expert modelling within the course and assessment documents, which refers to the provision of access to expert performances and the modelling of process (Herrington and Oliver, 2000). However, most included scaffolded experiences that built progressively across the semester; that is, in-class learning experiences that directly related to, or constituted the arts experiences that would be developed into arts artefacts for assessment. Students were required to engage with technology, created portfolios, and participated in arts-making processes that mirrored the expectations of school teaching.

The document analysis revealed a variety of assessment approaches, however synthesis of the overarching features of each academic's assessment confirmed a consistent implementation of core features. Praxis-focused assessment, as enacted by the educators in the research group:

- Encourages students to engage both as artist and educator.
- Requires students to reflect critically on their learning.
- Explicitly connects practice to theory and curriculum standards.
- Allows for multiple, flexible modes of assessment and participation.

Importantly, this process of document analysis revealed areas for improvement. For instance, only half the courses clearly articulated access to expert modelling, and only two explicitly mentioned teacher coaching or scaffolded feedback—both critical to supporting deeper learning in complex domains like the Arts (Herrington and Oliver, 2000).

To confirm the pedagogical value of praxis-focused assessment and further interrogate its critical characteristics, we turned to an examination of how our students perceived and engaged with these tasks via the open-ended responses within the student survey data.

Student survey

The student survey produced both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data provided compelling evidence that the vast majority of students saw value in the praxis-focused approach they had experienced as part of their Arts education assessments regarding practical arts making experiences, critical reflection and the integration of theory, pedagogy and arts practice. Open ended responses then provided insight into reasons why students held these sentiments, including the very small minority of negative Likert responses. Thematic analysis of the open-ended responses identified four key themes: learning through doing, confidence and competence, the power of reflection, and theory-practice integration. While these themes largely correlate with the three survey questions, and quantitative data are presented below with corresponding themes, it is valuable to note themes were not derived exclusively from individual survey items, but emerged inductively from the full set of open-ended responses, allowing for a more nuanced and integrated interpretation of student perspectives across the dataset.

Theme 1: Praxis as learning through doing. Table 5 presents the responses to the question asking respondents to rate the importance of practical arts making to their preparation as a teacher. As may be seen, 89% of respondents ($n = 90$) positively rated the value of practical arts making to preparedness.

In open-ended responses, students consistently articulated that practical engagement enabled them to move beyond surface understanding and into embodied, situated learning. Engagement in making, performing, or composing was described as a vital entry point into both content knowledge and pedagogical awareness. Respondent 26 [R26] stated, "This hands-on experience allows me to understand the processes involved in making art, whether it's visual arts, performance, or composition, and gives me the confidence to guide students through similar activities." Students noted how these practical arts experiences helped demystify the Arts and shifted their experience from being passive recipients of content to active participants in knowledge construction. This view reflects a key principle of praxis that was also emphasised in the document analysis: that knowledge is generated through experience, not just acquired through theory. R10 stated, "The Arts is a subject that is more easily explored and expressed through practical methods. Just like teaching, we learn by doing more than we learn by researching

Table 5. The importance of practical arts making to respondent preparation as a teacher.

Response	(%)	Count
Unimportant	1.98	2
Somewhat important	3.96	4
Neutral	4.95	5
Important	41.58	42
Extremely important	47.52	48
Total	100	101

through journal articles." In this way, practical assessment served as a generator of insight and pedagogical imagination. It is worth noting that some students indicated a strong sentiment of enjoyment in completing these tasks, for example as noted by R7: "Practical work is essential for students to learn how to apply their learning. A lot more fun and beneficial than writing an essay for example." 'Fun and enjoyment' are terms not often provided as key measures of a quality learning experience in a higher education setting, however, in 'learning through doing' they are the foundation of the engagement that leads to the building of confidence and competence; the next theme identified.

Theme 2: Praxis builds confidence and competence. This second theme emerged predominantly (although not exclusively) from the open-ended responses to the above survey question regarding experiencing arts practice. Responses identified under this theme recognised an additionally important insight: that engaging in arts practice generated a sense of confidence and competence. For many students, initial experiences with practical Arts assessment were marked by apprehension. For example, R76 revealed how, "Initially, I was nervous … thinking about the practical art activities required for the assignments. Going through the process with support helped to work through any limiting beliefs or struggle experienced." However, this kind of discomfort was often transformed into a source of growth through supported engagement, or what Herrington and Oliver (2000) term "teacher scaffolding". Several students reported that working through fears or self-doubt helped them develop the confidence to teach the Arts. For example, R17 stated, "I feel that it is extremely important for me to engage on a practical level. It provides an understanding of what students will feel when I am teaching, their 'roadblocks' and how they too may feel apprehensive about participating." Other similar comments confirmed that students recognised the value of their ability to model arts practices to their students. These reflections highlighted how the practical engagement fostered confidence for the classroom.

Beyond confidence, students thus recognised that the ability to model Arts practices authentically was a key part of pedagogical competence. This relationship between self-efficacy and pedagogical readiness is a hallmark of praxis. R101 noted, "Engaging in practical arts making is extremely important… It also provides me with ideas of how I could assist a student." Similarly, R48 observed, "If we intend to teach the Arts to students, we should have a deep understanding of how to perform/create/compose so that we can use our own experiences to inform our teaching." Such reflections reveal an awareness that competence in teaching the Arts is not merely theoretical, and that it embodies practice, reflection, and the ability to guide and scaffold students with skill and empathy.

Theme 3: The power of reflection in Praxis. Table 6 presents respondent responses to the question asking them to rate the importance of reflection on arts making to their preparation as a teacher. As may be seen, 87.13% ($n = 88$) rated reflection as important or extremely important.

Students identified reflection not as a bureaucratic requirement but as a central mechanism of growth as confident, intentional educators. Reflective assessment tasks such as journals, portfolios, or analytical commentaries were credited with deepening

Table 6. Importance of reflection for preparedness to teach.

Response	(%)	Count
Unimportant	1.98	2
Somewhat important	4.95	5
Neutral	5.94	6
Important	54.46	55
Extremely important	32.67	33
Total	100	101

awareness of both artistic and teaching processes. Several students described how the requirements for reflection enabled them to see what worked, identify improvements, and make connections to student learning. R60 summarised these attributes well:

> Reflective practice as a teacher is vital to continue to develop and grow. Reflecting on the practical arts takes it from a fun, superficial activity, to a complex thinking activity where a deeper understanding can be formed, making real life connections with the learning and processes of creating.

Similar to student recognition that practical arts experiences fostered empathy, some students also noted how the act of reflection also cultivated empathy, stating that it helped them understand how students might feel, or how they may struggle with some creative tasks:

> This process deepens my understanding of the techniques and concepts … and it makes me more aware of the challenges students might face. Reflection also helps me think about how to adapt and improve my teaching methods, ensuring I can create an inclusive, supportive environment where students feel comfortable experimenting and learning from their own experiences. R20

This reflects the recursive cycle of praxis: acting, reflecting, theorising, and then acting again with greater intention.

While the vast majority of student comments indicated positive experiences, a small number of negatively framed comments helped to identify important considerations, with a small number viewing the reflection requirements as repetitive or overly formalised, particularly when tied to assessment. For example, R66 noted, "It is important to reflect on artwork, but I think reflection during assessment means the focus of reflection is more on the aims of the assignment rather than being a beneficial reflection." Similarly, R24 stated, "Reflection is a great tool to utilise and teach, but having an assessment based on reflection seems over the top and that time could be better used in other areas." These comments may also reflect a more generalised disconnection with course assessment practices more broadly, rather than specific issues with engaging in reflective practices as prescribed in the completed tasks.

Table 7. The importance of making connections between arts making and pedagogic experience and theoretical learning.

Response	(%)	Count
Unimportant	0.00	0
Somewhat important	1.98	2
Neutral	7.92	8
Important	55.45	56
Extremely important	34.65	35
Total	100	101

Theme 4: Theory-practice integration. Table 7 presents responses to a question asking students to rate the importance of being required to make connections between arts making and their pedagogic experience and theoretical learning. As may be seen, respondents clearly valued the requirement to make these connections, with 90.10% ($n = 91$) of respondents rating this requirement as important or extremely important.

Perhaps most significantly, students understood praxis-focused assessment as an integrative force; one that required them to bring together practical Arts-making, pedagogical strategy, and theoretical understanding. This synthesis was seen as vital for authentic teaching practice. For example: R35 indicated how,

> Making connections from the art to the theory to pedagogy helps us to consider the what, why and how of the learning. What is it we want students to learn, why is this important and relevant, and how can I engage and include my students in the learning?

Respondents viewed theory not as an abstract, but as a tool to enhance their decision-making, enrich their lesson planning, and justify their teaching choices. In these reflections, praxis is visible not just as a method of learning but as a critical stance toward education; one that positions the teacher as an intentional, responsive practitioner. The integration of theory with practice was also emphasised. Students were not only drawing on academic sources to justify their teaching choices, but were using theory to shape, revise, and improve their practical engagement and planning processes. R13 noted, "By linking theories to practice, I believe we can become effective teachers who rely on evidence-based pedagogy." While many course outlines included references to theory, the way these were embedded within assessment tasks may not have always been made explicit in their relevance to students. This was revealed in a small number of student responses, where comments hinted at a disconnect between theoretical expectations and practical realities: "Theory creates a foundation of understandings to support everyday approaches selected by the teacher, but it does not replace the practical act of teaching" (R73). Similarly, other negative responses across the open-ended comments were typically received from students who indicated it was not their intention teach the Arts in the classroom, and who consequently perceived the practical arts tasks as irrelevant for their personal situation. With no sense of future practice to connect to, both the theory and the practice held less relevance.

Discussion

A model of praxis-focused creative arts assessment in initial teacher education

This research project began with the recognised need to obtain empirical evidence regarding the approach to assessment that many arts educators in ITE adopt: praxis-focused assessment. In doing so, we also wanted to determine critical characteristics of this approach that might lead to a more robust theorisation of praxis-focused assessment and its implementation, and ultimately, a model to guide future practice. Synthesising analysis of both datasets confirmed strong alignment between student experiences and curriculum design in several key areas. Both revealed that authentic, reflective, and theory-informed assessment tasks are highly valued by educators, and student data confirmed that the vast majority of students see these tasks as pedagogically effective. The document analysis demonstrated that deliberate design goals were embedded in the assessment tasks to stimulate students in considering their dual identity as both artists and teachers, and students positively rated and described the impact of these assessments as effective in bolstering their confidence and professional identity as classroom educators who felt more equipped to teach the Arts following completion of their course. Both data sets support the finding that praxis-focused assessment—when it involves arts-based doing, reflecting, and theorising—is highly effective in preparing students to feel prepared as generalist classroom teachers to teach the Arts in their future classroom. Course documents demonstrated strong alignment with real-world teaching contexts, and students reported that these practical experiences deepened their understanding and confidence.

It has generally been understood that the core of praxis-focused assessment in the Arts revolves around mandating tasks that require students to engage in the vital interplay between embodied arts learning experiences and critical reflection through the lens of arts pedagogy, curriculum and theory (Allen et al., 2014; Burke et al., 2023; Davis, 2018). However, the findings from this study extend upon this to identify critical characteristics that, when present, are valuable in fostering a more engaging, meaningful and authentic experience for learners that develops their sense of confidence and competence to teach the Arts in the classroom as generalist educators. Based on these findings, we developed a model for praxis-focused arts assessment, presented in Figure 1: "Critical Characteristics of Praxis-Focused Assessment in Creative Arts Teacher Education."

A more detailed summary of this model is provided in Table 8.

We now unpack these critical characteristics, exploring how they were developed through analysis of the data in concert with reflections on wider research.

Critical characteristics of praxis-focused assessment in creative arts teacher education

The foundational critical characteristic is learning embedded in a meaningful context that students readily recognise as valuable to their personal and professional learning (Green et al., 2018). The study revealed that even well-intentioned learning can be experienced as perfunctory rather than transformative if viewed as lacking in meaning by the student.
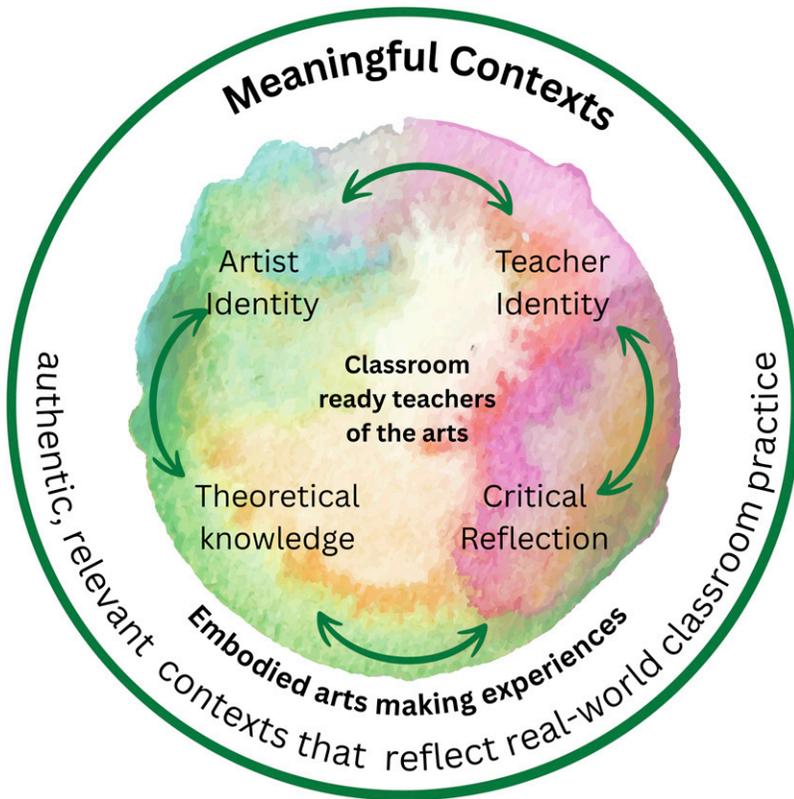
Figure 1. Critical characteristics of praxis-focused assessment in creative arts teacher education.

Equally, it revealed that when students recognise the relevance of the learning for classroom teaching, they view the assessment as meaningful and beneficial to their development of competence and confidence. This is particularly important in an era of GenAI. Seeking opportunities to frame tasks in a manner that foregrounds direct benefit to the students and presents as relevant to their interests and aspirations has the capacity to enhance student recognition of its value, through which they are likely to engage more readily and meaningfully with the task (Quinlan et al., 2025).

Embodied arts making experiences that promotes both artist and teacher identity was the next critical characteristic. Course assessments asked students to engage in arts-making, and importantly, reflect on this through the perspective of both artist and teacher. As artists, the tasks enabled students to develop their arts confidence and sense of competence, and empathy for the classroom student experience. This opportunity to learn by doing supports a significant body of research over time (Cleary, 2024; Cutcher and Cook, 2016; Ewing, 2010) and was typically considered by students in this study to be engaging and helpful in illustrating the theory being studied. The very small number of

Table 8. Critical characteristics of praxis-focused assessment in creative arts teacher education.

Critical characteristic	Summary explanation
Meaningful contexts	All learning is grounded in authentic, relevant contexts that reflect real-world classroom practice
Embodied arts making experiences • Engaging tasks • Illustrative of theory under study	There are two interconnected perspectives that students explore: 1. Artist identity: Students engage in arts making experiences such as performing, composing and visual creations to experience aesthetic awareness, creativity and personal expression. 2. Teacher identity: Students extend upon arts making experiences as relevant for classroom contexts, developing awareness of curriculum, pedagogy and arts theory in action.
Critical reflection • Relevant to student experience	The reflective process bridges experience, theory and professional identity. Students analyse their arts engagements through the lens of curriculum content, pedagogy and arts theory.
Outcome: Classroom-ready teachers of the arts	When implemented in a manner that honours all characteristics, praxis-focused assessment has the capacity to prepare capable and confident teachers who can plan, model, enact and justify meaningful arts learning.

negative student comments acknowledged that such experiences can be challenging or confronting and point to the need for sensitive design and support. Importantly, as praxis-focused tasks, students were required to build upon their embodied arts making experiences to develop their pedagogical content knowledge via application tasks such as planning and/or teaching lessons. Requirements to justify their pedagogical decisions using curriculum language were then recognised by the students as meaningful and authentic practices. As such, this project helps to strengthen the notion in previous research that praxis-focused assessment has significant value and represents an effective pedagogical tool (Burke et al., 2023).

An important consideration was identified regarding expert modelling and teacher scaffolding, both highlighted by Herrington and Oliver (2000) as valuable characteristics of authentic learning. Although teacher scaffolding was not explicitly evident across all course and assessment documents, student comments referred to the value of teacher support, indicating that they experienced scaffolding as part of their course and assessment learning. Expert modelling, however, was not consistently identified in the document analysis, and students did not explicitly refer to expert modelling in their own learning experiences. While students recognised the value of their course learning in preparing them to model arts processes in future classrooms, they did not describe modelling as a feature of their own learning. This prompted reflection among the research team. We recognised that Herrington and Oliver's framework is not specific to arts contexts and questioned whether expert modelling is an essential dimension of authentic arts assessment. Research by Cassotti et al. (2016) suggests that presenting adult learners with polished examples can lead to copying or fixation, which may inhibit creative

risk-taking. This risk may be heightened in high-stakes assessment contexts, where students feel pressure to perform well (Daker et al., 2023). A strict focus on modelling and teacher coaching may therefore unintentionally encourage replication rather than originality, potentially undermining the creative processes of "invent" and "make" (Dinham, 2023), which value individual expression and creativity. We concluded that while modelling and teacher scaffolding can be powerful pedagogical tools for embodied arts learning, their design and delivery must be carefully considered to avoid constraining students' creative expression.

Reflection as a critical driver of learning was foregrounded in both the document analysis and student survey responses. Most courses required reflective writing or responses, and students consistently described these tasks as fostering deeper awareness of their own pedagogical identities, creative processes, and classroom practices. This alignment suggests a strong understanding among educators and learners that reflection is not an add-on, but an integral part of becoming a thoughtful, adaptive Arts teacher. Both sources confirmed that students were expected—and in many cases successfully supported—to make connections between practical Arts work, curriculum expectations, and educational theory. Curriculum documents included explicit learning outcomes linking assessment to pedagogy and theory, and students commented frequently on how theory helped them understand their teaching decisions more clearly and confidently.

Further, although course documents required theoretical engagement, the degree to which this was deeply embedded varied. Students' reflections showed a wide range: some described rich, meaningful integration of theory and practice, while others commented on theory feeling "tacked on" or disconnected from their creative work. This variability suggests that while theory-practice integration is intended, its depth and coherence may depend on individual instructors or institutional approaches.

However, the synthesis of the data highlighted aspects for further consideration regarding this in some of the participating academics' approaches. Not all documents clearly articulated how theoretical integration would occur, and this was again evident through a small number of student comments indicating they felt that theoretical elements were either tokenistic or underdeveloped. Consequently, well scaffolded critical reflection must explicitly integrate theory in a manner that allows students to see theory in action within a meaningful context. These findings align with critical pedagogical perspectives that view praxis not merely as method but as philosophy. Freire's (1993) concept of praxis—reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it—is evident in how students described their evolving awareness of themselves as creative agents and future teachers. Moreover, the data supports Eisner's (2002) assertion that Arts education contributes uniquely to the development of perception, imagination, and expressive ability, particularly when learners are given space to reflect on and theorise their practice.

Conclusion

While practical assessment and the development of artist–teacher identity are established features of arts education, the innovation of this study lies in its articulation of the Critical

Characteristics of Praxis-Focused Assessment in Creative Arts Teacher Education model, which synthesises these elements into a structured, empirically supported framework. Unlike prior work that explores these concepts in isolation or through single-institution case studies, this research identifies four critical characteristics: meaningful context, embodied arts engagement, critical reflection, and theory-practice integration, across our six institutions, offering a transferable model that responds to contemporary challenges such as generative AI, online learning, and curriculum pressures in ITE.

While this research presents a compelling case for the value of praxis-focused assessment and representation of critical characteristics of the approach, several limitations must be acknowledged. Participation in the student survey was voluntary, potentially introducing a self-selection bias. Students who chose to participate may have held more positive or more critical views than their peers who did not participate. Second, the analysis of course documentation may not fully represent the enacted curriculum—what happens in tutorials, lectures, or informal learning spaces may differ from what is written in outlines. Additionally, the analysis was conducted by those who have a vested interest in the success of our current approach. While the student survey was an integral aspect of the research to check for bias, it must nevertheless be acknowledged that some possible critiques of the assessment approaches were overlooked. Finally, the diversity of institutional contexts means that findings cannot be generalised across all ITE programs, and the relatively small number of student responses per institution may limit the depth of institution-specific insights.

This research explores the development of arts assessment tasks; however, it has not explored the evaluation process and the many complexities around this, which is an important avenue for future exploration. Additional avenues for future research also include strategies for eliciting strong creative responses from students. Further understanding might also be made from longitudinal studies that follow students into their early teaching years to assess how praxis-focused learning manifests in professional practice. Additionally, given the rise of GenAI, reconsideration of how critical reflection can be meaningfully assessed, and strategies for incorporating AI generated work into assessment while still demonstrating student understanding should also be considered.

Overall, though, the study affirms the value of praxis as both a pedagogical tool and a philosophical orientation for teacher education. Through praxis-focused assessment, future educators are invited not just to learn about teaching, but to become teachers who reflect, create, and respond to the world with insight, integrity, and imagination.

Acknowledgements

Author contributions

Declaration of conflicting interests

Funding

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance for this research was provided by the University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics Committee in March 2024 (Project ID: 30245). Prior to commencing the survey, participants were presented with information outlining the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, data handling procedures, and ethical considerations. Participants were required to indicate informed consent by ticking a checkbox confirming that they had read and understood. This consent included consent to publish anonymized study findings.

ORCID iDs

Katie Burke https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1086-8981
David Roy https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8796-6179
William Baker https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0859-4996
Sian Chapman https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7474-0277
Katie Hotko https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1779-7664
Amy Hamilton https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7367-7480

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are not publicly available. Ethical approval for the research did not include provisions for open data access.

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

References

Allen JM, Wright S and Innes M (2014) Pre-service visual art teachers' perceptions of assessment in online learning. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 39(9): 1–17.

Berry A, Depaepe F and van Driel J (2016) Pedagogical content knowledge in teacher education. In: Loughran J and Hamilton ML (eds) *International Handbook of Teacher Education*. Springer, Vol. 1, 347–386.

Biggs J and Tang C (2020) Constructive alignment: an outcomes-based approach to teaching anatomy. In: Chan LK and Pawlina W (eds) *Teaching Anatomy: A Practical Guide*. 2nd edition. Springer, 23–33.

Braun V and Clarke V (2022) *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*. Sage.

Burke K (2021) "How can the creative arts possibly be taught online?" perspectives and experiences of online educators in higher education. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 49(3): 347–361.

Burke K and Fanshawe M (2021) The value of praxis-based assessment to stimulate practical engagement and classroom readiness in online initial teacher education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 46(10): 287–300.

Burke K, Baker B and Hobdell G (2023) Getting "hands-on": praxis-focused assessment to enhance online arts teacher education. *Distance Education* 44(2): 213–229.

Burke K, Chapman S, Chapman S, et al. (2024) (Re)envisioning online arts education content delivery in initial teacher preparation through collective a/r/tographic inquiry. *International Journal of Education and the Arts* 25(22): 1–27.

Cain M, Burke K and Nislev E (2024) When constellations align: what early childhood preservice teachers need from online learning to become confident and competent teachers of the arts. *British Educational Research Journal* 50(1): 331–347.

Cassotti M, Camarda A, Poirel N, et al. (2016) Fixation effect in creative ideas generation: opposite impacts of example in children and adults. *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 19: 146–152.

Chang H (2022) Individual and collaborative autoethnography for social science research. In: Adams TE, Holman Jones SL and Ellis C (eds) *Handbook of Autoethnography*. 2nd edition. Routledge, 139–162.

Chapman S and Wright PR (2024) Creative practice, entanglements and complex emergence: teaching in the arts. *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 52: 101544.

Chapman S, Wright PR and Pascoe R (2019) Purpose, value, and practice in Western Australian schools: understanding misalignment in arts learning. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy* 16(2): 120–140.

Cleary V (2024) Thinking through making: what kinds of learning take place when HE students engage with creative arts technicians? *Art, Design and Communication in Higher Education*. Epub ahead of print 5 July 2024. DOI: 10.1386/adch_00087_1.

Collins A (2016) Generalist pre-service teacher education, self-efficacy and arts education: an impossible expectation? *International Journal of Education and the Arts* 17(26): 1–23. Available from: https://www.ijea.org/v17n26/

Cutcher L and Cook P (2016) One must also be an artist: online delivery of teacher education. *International Journal of Education and the Arts* 17(13): 1–19. Available from: https://www.ijea.org/v17n13/

Daker RJ, Viskontas IV, Porter GF, et al. (2023) Investigating links between creativity anxiety, creative performance, and state-level anxiety and effort during creative thinking. *Scientific Reports* 13: 17095.

Davis S (2018) Flexibility, constraints and creativity: cultivating creativity in teacher education. In: Snepvangers K, Thomson P and Harris A (eds) *Creativity Policy, Partnerships and Practice in Education*. Springer, 331–352.

Deehan J, Hutchesson RC and Parker P (2022) Learning to teach without teaching: a mixed methods case study of preservice teachers' efficacy beliefs and perceptions of an evidence-based creative arts subject. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 47(7): 90–115.

Dinham J (2023) *Delivering Authentic Arts Education*. 5th edition. Cengage Learning.

Eisner EW (2002) *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*. Yale University Press.

Ewing R (2010) *The Arts and Australian Education: Realising Potential. Australian Education Review*. Australian Council for Educational Research. Available from: https://research.acer.edu.au/aer/11/

Ewing R and Gibson R (2015) Creative teaching or teaching creatively? Using creative arts strategies in preservice teacher education. *Waikato Journal of Education* 20(3): 77–91.

Fawns T, Bearman M, Dawson P, et al. (2024) Authentic assessment: from panacea to criticality. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 50(3): 396–408.

Freire P (1993) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin.

Goetz MA and Zwirn S (2010) How being a teaching artist can influence K-12 education. *Studies in Art Education* 51(3): 219–232.

Green C, Eady M and Andersen P (2018) Preparing quality teachers: bridging the gap between tertiary experiences and classroom realities. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 6(1): 104–125.

Harris LR, Brown GTL and Dargursh J (2018) Not playing the game: student assessment resistance as a form of agency. *Australian Educational Researcher* 45(1): 125–140.

Herrington J and Oliver R (2000) An instructional design framework for authentic learning environments. *Educational Technology Research & Development* 48(3): 23–49. Available from: https://www.jstor.org/stable/30220266

Joseph D, Merrick B and Baker W (2025) Arts education matters, what are we waiting for? Perceptions of initial teacher education students in Australia. *Teachers and Teaching* 1–20. DOI: 10.1080/13540602.2024.2438167.

Julsar T and Dickson P (2023) Time management and academic achievement: examining the roles of prioritization, procrastination and socialization. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology* 8(6): 8115965.

Kemmis S (2022) *Transforming Practices: Changing the World with the Theory of Practice Architectures*. Springer.

Koopman WJ, Watling CJ and LaDonna KA (2020) Autoethnography as a strategy for engaging in reflexivity. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research* 7: 1–9.

Leduc D and Béland S (eds) (2021) *Perspectives on Learning Assessment in the Arts in Higher Education: Supporting Transparent Assessment Across Artistic Disciplines*. Routledge.

Lierse S (2015) Developing fully online pre-service music and arts education courses. *Victorian Journal of Music Education* 49(1): 29–34.

Lincoln YS and Guba EG (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Sage Publications, Vol. 75.

Lindsay G (2021) Visual arts pedagogy in early childhood contexts: the baggage of self-efficacy beliefs, pedagogical knowledge and limited pre-service training. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* 46(1): 80–92.

Lummis G, Morris J and Paolino A (2014) Investigating the personal experiences and self-efficacy of Western Australian primary pre-service teachers in the visual arts. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 39(5): 50–64.

Maras K and Shand B (2023) Critical and creative thinking as a form of making in art education. *Studies in Art Education* 64: 23–39.

Moore SJ and Baker W (2019) Indigenous creativities, the Australian curriculum, and pre-service teachers. *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives* 18(3): 88–99. Available from: https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/IEJ

Patton MQ (2015) *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*. 4th edition. Sage Publications.

Quinlan KM, Sellei G and Fiorucci W (2025) Educationally authentic assessment: reframing authentic assessment in relations to students' meaningful engagement. *Teaching in Higher Education* 30(3): 717–734.

Roy D, Baker B and Hamilton A (2025) *Teaching the Arts: Early Childhood and Primary Education*. 4th edition. Cengage.

Russell-Bowie DE (2010) A ten-year follow-up investigation of preservice generalist primary teachers' background and confidence in teaching music. *Australian Journal of Music Education* 2010: 76–86. Available from: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ916792

Tight M (2020) Student retention and engagement in higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 44(5): 689–704.

Villarroel V, Bloxham S, Bruna D, et al. (2017) Authentic assessment: creating a blueprint for course design. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 43(5): 840–854.

Author biographies

Katie Burke is an Associate Professor in Arts Curriculum and Pedagogy in Initial Teacher Education at the University of Southern Queensland. Katie is known for her research and practice in enhancing online learning for creative and authentic engagement, including her innovative online pedagogy of care, developed to meet the challenges of facilitating online learning, particularly in the creative arts. Her contributions to scholarship in this domain include the facilitation of a national Community of Practice with online arts educators, and her research, scholarship, and practice have resulted in the receipt of a National teaching citation, alongside multiple university level awards.

Dr David Roy is a lecturer and researcher in Education and Creative Arts at the University of Newcastle (AUS); and was formerly a teacher for 17 years. He uses his research to inform inclusion and equity practices across Australia, with a particular focus on children with a disability, policy, and engagement with the arts, and works closely with politicians and policy makers across all political persuasions. He co-authored Teaching the Arts: Early Childhood and Primary Education (Cambridge University Press) now in its 4th edition.

William Baker is Senior Lecturer in the School of Education. He holds degrees in Music Education, Education, Fine Art, a Graduate Certificate (ULT) and he is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Bill's co-authored pre-service teacher textbook, Teaching the Arts: Early Childhood and Primary Education, published by Cambridge University Press, is in its 4th edition. Bill has been Chief Investigator on a Tasmanian Community Fund grant in collaboration with Tasmanian Youth Orchestras, and an Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) People-to-People Grant (Australia-ASEAN Council), working with the Tasmanian Youth Orchestras and the Singapore National Youth Orchestra. Bill has researched and written extensively on Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (SoTL), particularly in the areas of ITE preparedness in Music and the Visual Arts, constructive alignment and assessment practices, and Technology Enhanced Learning & Teaching (TELT).

Sian Chapman is a Senior Lecturer at Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia, teaching into undergraduate and post-graduate ITE programs. Her research interests include education policy and practice, teacher agency and change, and understanding systemic difference through complexity theory. These concepts are explored across a range of topics including arts education, inclusive education, teacher wellbeing and practice. Sian is also the current President of the Western Australian Institute for Educational Research (WAIER).

Katie Hotko is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Education and an arts-based educational researcher with expertise in a/r/tography, participatory methodologies, and arts-informed inquiry. Her doctoral thesis, We Make Art and It Makes Us: An A/r/tographic Exploration of Generalist Primary Teachers' Creative Self-Belief (Southern Cross University, 2022), employed Whiteheadian process philosophy to investigate the dynamic relationship between art-making and teacher identity. A self-taught visual artist, she is committed to making the visual arts accessible and inclusive for all learners.

Amy Hamilton is a practicing visual artist and Associate Professor in Visual Art and Arts Education in the College of Education, Psychology and Social Work at Flinders University in South Australia. Amy's research is predominantly arts practice-based. Her research interests are varied, including artworks representing an investigation into the adoption of Chinese girls by Australian families, and an autoethnographic study in the form of a self-portrait constructed with the writing of the autoethnography. Amy's most recent artworks have been in collaboration with Professor Ben Wadham about de-camouflaging the military. She is Chief investigator in a research project exploring veteran transition at an elite AFL Football Club and Designing a Tertiary support program for veterans. Recent art education publications have also explored the preparation of pre-service teachers to teach in and through the arts. Amy was on the advisory team for the arts in the Australian Curriculum. She has co-authored Teaching the Arts: Early Childhood and Primary Education (Cambridge University Press) now in its 4th edition.