

**FIELD EXPERIENCES  
IN THE CONTEXT OF REFORM OF  
CANADIAN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Volume 2

Edited by

Thomas Falkenberg and Hans Smits

Faculty of Education of the University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba



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REFORM OF CANADIAN TEACHER  
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2 Volumes

*Edited by*

**THOMAS FALKENBERG  
HANS SMITS**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents .....	iii
Acknowledgments .....	vii

## Volume 1

### Chapter 1

<i>Introduction: Central Issues of Field Experiences in Canadian Teacher Education Programs</i> .....	1
THOMAS FALKENBERG	

### Chapter 2

<i>Introduction: The Aporia of Ideology and Utopia – Field Experiences in Teacher Education as Peril and Promise</i> .....	51
HANS SMITS	

### Chapter 3

<i>Working Within and Against Governance in Quebec: Understanding Competency Evaluation in the Field Placement</i> .....	67
AVRIL AITKEN and ELIZABETH KREUGER	

### Chapter 4

<i>Voices from the Field: Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates in Learning Conversations</i> .....	79
KATHY BROAD and MARY LYNN TESSARO	

### Chapter 5

<i>Does Teacher Education Expect Too Much from Field Experience?</i> .....	91
SHAWN MICHAEL BULLOCK and TOM RUSSELL	

### Chapter 6

<i>Supporting Teacher Candidates At-Risk in Field Experiences: Organizational and Program Responsiveness</i> .....	101
ANNE MARIE CHUDLEIGH and CATHI GIBSON-GATES	

### Chapter 7

<i>What Should Be the Role of Field Experiences in Teacher Education Programs?</i> .....	117
DAVID DILLON and KEVIN O'CONNOR	

**Chapter 8**  
*Field Experiences in the Teacher Education Programs at Nipissing University* ..... 147  
SUSAN E. ELLIOTT-JOHNS and OLIVE RIDLER

**Chapter 9**  
*Rethinking “Field Experiences” in an Era of Teacher Education Reform:  
A Governance Perspective* ..... 165  
THOMAS FALKENBERG and JON YOUNG

## Volume 2

**Chapter 10**  
*Field Experiences in Teacher Education: What Is and What Could Be –  
A Case Study of the University of Alberta* ..... 187  
ROSEMARY FOSTER, RANDOLPH WIMMER, MAUREEN WINTER, and  
FERN SNART

**Chapter 11**  
*What is the Role of Field Experiences in the Continuing Professional Development  
of University Faculty?* ..... 225  
MARK HIRSCHKORN and PAULA KRISTMANSON

**Chapter 12**  
*Towards the Education of Preservice Teacher Educators Located in Distant Regions* ..... 235  
FRANCE LACOURSE and ENRIQUE CORREA MOLINA

**Chapter 13**  
*Field Experiences at the University of Saskatchewan: A Current State of Affairs* ..... 249  
LYNN LEMISKO and ANGELA WARD

**Chapter 14**  
*Bridging the Theory-Practice Divide: Teaching Science Methods off Campus* ..... 261  
RONALD J. MACDONALD

**Chapter 15**  
*The Potential Role of Field Experiences in Teacher Education Programs* ..... 275  
ANDREA K. MARTIN and TOM RUSSELL

**Chapter 16**  
*Landscape of Experience: Does It Have a Place in Teacher Education Programs?* ..... 285  
PHILIPPE MAUBANT and LUCIE ROGER

<b>Chapter 17</b>		
	<i>&lt;Alter&gt;ing Experiences in the Field: Next Practices .....</i>	297
	CATHERINE MCGREGOR, KATHY SANFORD, and TIM HOPPER	
<b>Chapter 18</b>		
	<i>Disrupting Perfect: Rethinking the Role of Field Experiences .....</i>	317
	VALERIE MULHOLLAND, KATHLEEN NOLAN, and TWYLA SALM	
<b>Chapter 19</b>		
	<i>An Overview of Mount Royal University's Existing Field Experiences and Related Features that Enhance the Approved Bachelor of Education Program .....</i>	327
	IRENE NAESTED, JODI NICKEL, STEFAN SIKORA, and NORMAN VAUGHAN	
<b>Chapter 20</b>		
	<i>Teacher Education in Situated, Selected and Connected Approaches to Becoming Students of Teaching .....</i>	345
	KATHY SANFORD, TIMOTHY HOPPER, and CATHERINE MCGREGOR	
<b>Chapter 21</b>		
	<i>Towards Equity for Internationally Educated Teachers in Teacher Education Field Experiences .....</i>	359
	CLEA SCHMIDT	
<b>Contributors</b> .....		369





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*Picture from the last day of the Third Working Conference on Research in Teacher Education in Canada  
Winnipeg, 7 November 2009*

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The Third Working Conference on Research in Teacher Education, held 5-7 November 2009 at the University of Manitoba (see [www.umanitoba.ca/education/TEResearch](http://www.umanitoba.ca/education/TEResearch)), provided the context for the face-to-face working sessions in which participants engaged with the ideas that their colleagues presented in draft papers prepared prior to the conference. For her work behind the scene we would like to acknowledge the support that Sylvia Lapointe from the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba provided to the organization of the conference. Her efficient help with the finances, the conference site, and many other organizational issues was invaluable. We also would like to acknowledge the generous financial support for the conference by the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, the University of Manitoba Conference Sponsorship Program, and the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba.



# Chapter 10

## *Field Experiences in Teacher Education: What Is and What Could Be – A Case Study of the University of Alberta*

ROSEMARY FOSTER, RANDOLPH WIMMER,  
MAUREEN WINTER, and FERN SNART

*In this paper the authors draw on their review of the teacher education research literature to highlight what they argue are five common weaknesses in current field experiences programs offered through faculties of education. These are: field experiences are often conducted independently of other components of teacher preparation programs; field experiences are not always contextualized or justified through empirical evidence; a chronic theory-practice gap exists between university-based coursework and the daily routines of schools where the field experiences take place; inadequate communication and collaboration among the various partners responsible for the delivery of the field experiences programming; and the lack of a clear and coherent supervisory model to guide the mentorship of Student Teachers. The authors then use these five common weaknesses as an analytical framework in their case study of the state of the art and future of the field experiences program in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. The authors claim that the role of universities in teacher education is to contribute “research and critique” that links the “bigger picture” of global and national policy contexts to the “smaller pictures” of policies and practices within schools and classrooms. Based on this claim, the authors argue the importance of exploring cross-professional and more holistic and global approaches to the preparation of professionals and illustrate by referencing a recent collaboration between the Faculty of Education and the Health Sciences faculties at the University of Alberta.*

### **Background**

Like many places of teacher education, the University of Alberta is reviewing its undergraduate Bachelor of Education program. In brief, in 2004-2005, the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Council of the Faculty of Education had extensive discussion prior to passing a motion to support the creation of two ad hoc committees to undertake an internal review of the undergraduate teacher education program. The first committee developed a statement of principles that was approved by the Faculty of Education Council in February 2006. The five principles are: academic and scholarly rigour; pedagogical expertise; teacher identity; diverse contexts affecting students and teachers; and field experience. In 2007, a second committee, the Undergraduate Review Committee, used these principles as a framework for gathering data

to address the questions: To what degree is the current undergraduate program congruent with the principles? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current program? The Undergraduate Review Committee recommended the Faculty of Education move to the next stage of the undergraduate review and establish a committee to design, develop, and implement a program more closely aligned with the Undergraduate Program Principles. In September 2008, the Curriculum Implementation Committee, a sub-committee of the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Council, began the work of designing and implementing a revised undergraduate program<sup>1</sup>. The review process has been extensive and involved many faculty members and researchers. Throughout the review process and development of a curriculum framework, the Faculty has found what teacher educator scholars (Hoban, 2005; Wilson, 1999) have argued for some time; namely, field experiences must be at the core of teacher education programs.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a description and analysis of the field experiences component of the undergraduate Bachelor of Education program in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. We have organized the discussion and arguments under the following: Background, The Importance of Field Experiences for Teacher Education: A Review of the Literature; Weaknesses and Tensions in Current Field Experiences in Teacher Education: A Review of the Literature; Teacher Education and Field Experiences at the University of Alberta; Analysis of the Field Experiences Program at the University of Alberta; and Learning From Other Professions: What Could be in Field Experiences in Teacher Education at the University of Alberta and Beyond.

### **The Importance of Field Experiences for Teacher Education: A Review of the Literature**

The lack of comprehensive research examining practicum programs in teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005) has prompted scholars to argue that educators need to compare, contrast, and study these programs, and explore what future practices might look like from a more holistic and global perspective (Alexander, Gerofsky & Wideen, 1999; Jones & Ewing, 2002; Ralph & Konchak, 1996). In the conclusion of this paper, we argue that the time for such an exploration is “right,” given the growing universal demand for well-prepared professionals in all disciplines (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cross & Israelit, 2000; Ralph, Walker & Wimmer, 2008). Society and communities delegate to those responsible for teacher education the task of preparing its teachers. The status and responsibility of these practitioners have acquired an increased sense of importance and urgency in the contemporary context of a globalized world with heightened mobility, diversity, and economic competition (Aguayo, 2004; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Harrison & Kachur, 1999; Spring, 2008; Ziv, 2002). In western Canada, for example the sense of urgency is particularly evident in the preparation of Indigenous teachers, and of non-Indigenous teachers who may be teaching an ever-increasing diverse Aboriginal population that must learn new ways to mediate the demands of the traditional world of its ancestors and the global market place (Heimbecker, Minner & Prater, 2000; Herbert, 2003; Hill, 1998). In addition, there is evidence the nature of teacher education

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<sup>1</sup> For more information and documentation, please visit the Faculty’s web site at: <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/education/nav02.cfm?nav02=56652&nav01=13164>

itself is changing in the context of what Levin and Riffel (1997), Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005), and Goodlad (1994) have termed a *changing world*. The traditional landscape is being altered from one in which the large research universities served as the sole agents providing preservice teacher education, to one in which a variety of providers are involved, such as smaller colleges and affiliated organizations (Edwards, Gilroy & Hartley, 2002; Schoenfeld, 2003, Scholler-Jaquish, 1996). In addition to traditional school-based placements, an increasing number of teacher education programs are recognizing the value of collaborative and community field experiences as a part of teacher education, and there is an increased emphasis on teaching prospective teachers how to learn about and build upon the cultural resources that pupils bring to school (Clift & Brady, 2005; Woloshyn, Chalmers, & Bosacki, 2005; Zeichner, 2002).

Student teaching is a critical aspect of preservice teacher education (O'Brien & Elcess, 2005; Zeichner, 2002). Wilson (1999) referred to field experiences as the core feature of teacher education. The foundational premise upon which all of these practice-based programs are based is that authentic and deep learning occurs when the learner applies relevant knowledge and skills to solve real-life problems encountered by actual practitioners in the field (Renzulli, Gentry & Reis, 2004; Wilkerson & Gijsselaers, 1996). Experiential learning programs (Kolb, 1983) are identified by a variety of labels across the professions, including: preceptorship (Corbet, Owen & Hayden, 2002); clerkship (Pangaro et al., 2003); service learning (Walsh, 2003); clinical practicum (Seigel, Cole, Li & Eddy, 2000); extended practicum (Ralph, 1991, 1998, 2005a, 2005b); externship (Sprecher, Krehbiel & Hauptman, 2002); clinical education (Poirrier, Granger & Todaro, 2000); or cooperative education (Linn, Howard & Miller, 2004). Kolb's (1983) seminal work on experiential learning, together with recent neurological research (Zull, 2004), has confirmed the tenets of field-based education: the more areas of the brain learners use when solving relevant and realistic problems, the more meaningful the learning will be. Specifically, via the processes of experiencing, reflecting, abstracting, actively testing, and feeling in a realistic setting, the learning is enhanced. The various field experiences incorporated in teacher education have been designed to reflect these principles (Helm, 2006; Ralph, 2003/2005).

Historically, the field experiences component of most teacher education programs has allowed students to spend a period of time in an actual practice setting under the joint mentorship/supervision of an experienced teacher and a university or college advisor. This dyad collaborates to assist the novice to learn to integrate "theory and practice" and to become socialized into the profession (Brett, 2006; Dalzell, 1997; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1998; Kunzman, 2003).

### **Weaknesses and Tensions in Current Field Experiences in Teacher Education: A Review of the Literature**

Even though students typically rate the field experiences component of their teacher preparation highly (Ehrlich & Greenberg, 2002; Greene & Yesenosky, 1990), there have been weaknesses identified in the research literature (Clift & Brady, 2005; Ralph, Walker & Wimmer, 2008).

One weakness is that, traditionally, field experiences have been conducted in isolation and often independently of other components of the teacher education program. Put simply, the teacher preparation institution delivers required course work based on current social and educational theory, while the field experience partners deliver and supervise the practicum in school settings that, arguably, have not changed appreciably since the industrial age (Levin, 2001; Levin & Riffel, 1997). However, factors including an increasingly globalized world with heightened mobility, diversity, political conflict and economic competition are forcing teacher education programs to explore innovative ways to prompt more collaboration between teacher preparation institutions and the practical preparation of novice teachers in the schools (Spring, 2008). It has been argued that neophyte teachers must be educated to seek creative responses to problems that are arising in education worldwide as a result of globalization, increased diversity, political conflict, and economic competition (Harrison & Kachur, 1999; Lengnick-Hall & Legnick-Hall, 2002; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski & Flowers, 2004). Schools and teachers need ways to accommodate all learners and prepare them for the changing world (Darling-Hammond & Barnsford, 2005; Goodlad, 1994; Levin & Riffel, 1997).

A second weakness is the wide range of field experience programs that are not always contextualized or justified through empirical evidence. Field experience programs in professional faculties within universities vary greatly not only cross-departmentally within universities themselves, but also between and among universities. One group of educators has called for more relevant comparative, and widely-disseminated research that is grounded in field-based practice, in order to inform decision-makers as they seek to enhance preservice programs of professional development (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Field, 2007; Kosnik, & Beck, 2005; Phelan, 2005; Ralph, 1996; Statistics Canada, 2002). This fact does not mean that all field experiences programs must be made identical. In reality, their specific paradigms, purposes, and structures are unique, as they should be. However, an exploration of the various types of experiential learning may provide much needed empirical evidence, and even wisdom, for organizers and researchers as they seek to re-formulate their offerings to better equip graduates for the challenges and opportunities emerging in the 21st century (Alcay, 2003; Boyatzis, Cowen & Kolb, 1994; Fenwick, 2003; Kelly, 1999). Particularly promising is the work of Canadian scholars who are calling for the inclusion of the evidence that draws on the perspectives of Student Teachers, those who have recently experienced the transition from the university campus to the school setting (Russell, 2005; Volante, 2006).

A third weakness identified in the literature has been a chronic theory-practice gap between the university-based coursework and research, and the daily routines of teachers (Beck & Kosnik, 2002a, 2002b; Ralph, 1994-1995; Rogman & Hopp, 1999; Russell, 2005; Volante, 2006). It has been argued that current practice in traditional teacher education programs has done little to promote the linkages of theory and practice (Russell, 2007; 2005). This gap is often accentuated by a lack of involvement in many field experiences programs by full-time faculty members (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Kosnik & Beck, 2005; Waddell, 1999). Furthermore, there is clear documentation of teacher education being used as a “cash cow” in research universities to fund higher status activities, and of inequitable teaching loads and faculty salaries among those who do the work of teacher education and those who do not (Zeichner, 2002). While the central role played by field-based teachers in teacher education has been widely acknowledged for many teacher education programs (Aways, et al., 2003; Beck & Kosnik, 2002a; Bennett, 2002; Clarke, 2001), there is a shortage of teachers who are adequately prepared to share in the delivery of the field experiences (Brett, 2006; Wideen & Lemma, 1999;

Wolfensperger Bashford, 2002). Volante (2006) asserted that the current situation, which relies primarily on volunteer supervisors, provides no formal mechanism to assess the suitability of Cooperating/Mentor Teachers. Often this ineffective university-field partnership is further eroded because of competing roles, duties, and interests of both the faculty and the field-based educators (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Ward & Saylor, 2002). Participants are unable to sustain the expected level of commitment and support for the field experience program over time. As a result, students enrolled in these experiences become dissatisfied and frustrated (Ohio, 2002; Ralph, Walker & Wimmer, 2008; Volonté, 2006). There are vestiges of ill-conceived and hastily implemented reforms in some field experiences programs that were not properly initiated and/or maintained (Bullough & Kauchak, 1997).

A fourth weakness of some current field experience programs is the pervasive problem of inadequate communication and collaboration that persists among the various participants (Anderson & Lovejoy, 2000; Zeichner, 1996). A clear conceptualization of a systematic teaching-learning framework for integrating the practicum, prior coursework, and the neophytes' initial experiences in his/her first position in his/her professional career is often lacking (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Solomon Cohen & Milone-Nuzzo, 2001).

A fifth persistent weakness that appears to arise in the delivery of many field experiences is the lack of a clear and coherent supervisory model to guide the mentorship process (Goodlad, 1994; Janssen, Landolt & Grunfeld, 2003; Ralph, Walker & Wimmer, 2008). Often, the mentoring relationships, interactions, expectations, and results are disorganized, unsystematic, and ineffective, leaving the student teachers wondering whether teaching is the right profession for them (Rajuan, Beijaard, Verloop, 2008; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

One supervision model that appears to have potential to improve this situation and address issues of mentorship and induction into teaching is *Contextual Supervision* (Ralph, 1993, 1998, 2003). Ralph defines contextual supervision in the following:

I have defined Contextual Supervision (CS) as a developmental leadership model that is used by supervisors (i.e., experienced practitioners in either permanent or temporary mentoring roles) to promote the professional development (i.e., the acquisition or the improvement of job-related skills, tasks, and/or knowledge) of supervisees (i.e., proteges in this relationship whose goal is to learn and/or improve these professional skills or tasks Ralph, 1993b, 1996a, 1998, 2000, and 2001). The CS model, based on the original Situational Leadership approach (Hersey, 1985; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977), has been developed and refined during the past twelve years in the field of the supervision of instructional development. It has been used both with beginning pre-K to 12 teachers and their supervisors, and with novice instructors at the college and university level. (See Ralph, 1993b, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1996-1997, 1998; Watt, 1998).  
(Ralph, 2003, p. 2)

Contextual supervision has been used in a variety of disciplines, and has been shown to add clarity and direction to the supervisory process of assisting neophyte practitioners to develop their professional skills (Ralph, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). Perhaps, the promise of the *Contextual Supervision Model* warrants further research in a variety of environments (Posner, 2004).

In the following section, we describe the field experiences program at the University of Alberta and in our analysis make reference to the above cited weaknesses and inherent tensions.

## Teacher Education and Field Experiences at the University of Alberta

### *A Program to Accommodate Diverse Backgrounds and Needs*

There are 3400 undergraduate Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) and post-baccalaureate diploma students in the Faculty of Education at University of Alberta. Students have a choice of program delivery routes that include: a 2 year B. Ed. after degree; a 5 year combined B. Ed. degree with the Faculties of Arts, Science, Native Studies, Human Ecology, and Physical Education; and a “1 + 3” year undergraduate B. Ed. degree. Currently, these program routes are offered in the disciplines of Elementary Education or Secondary Education, and sometimes both. Approximately 60% of students select the Elementary Education option, and 40% the Secondary Education option. The “1 + 3” program route is the largest and most flexible, accommodating approximately 70% of the students in the Faculty, with over half selecting the Elementary Education option. Students who select the “1 + 3” program route take their first year (or 2) of post-secondary education at another university, in another Faculty at University of Alberta, or at other accredited post-secondary institutions that offer transferable and applicable post-secondary credit courses (see: *Online Alberta Transfer Guide*). Students who choose this route typically transfer a minimum of 24 credits (e.g., 8 x 3 credit courses), and may transfer up to 60 credits (e.g., 20 x 3 credit courses) into their undergraduate B.Ed. program at University of Alberta. Students must complete a total of 120 credits (e.g., 40 x 3 credit courses) of required and elective courses to complete the “1 + 3” B. Ed. program route. The required courses in all B. Ed. program routes address the following topics: curriculum and learning theory; child development; special education and inclusion; assessment; classroom management; and ethics and the law. The University of Alberta on-line calendar has complete descriptions of programs and courses (see: [www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Undergrad/Education/index.html](http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Undergrad/Education/index.html)).

The Faculty also offers a B.Ed. program in collaboration with 5 provincial colleges, including 2 in Tribal Colleges. The Faculty also offers a post-baccalaureate undergraduate diploma in specializations housed within the 4 teaching departments (Elementary Education, Secondary Education, Educational Psychology, Educational Policy Studies). Diploma programs typically are 24 credits (e.g., 8 x 3 credit courses) and must be completed within 4 years. Administered through the Undergraduate Student Services Office, the Faculty offers 6 field experiences courses as part of the requirements of the various B.Ed. program routes. There is an optional field experience, *Educational Field Experience 490*, which students may also take. Currently, the Faculty offers an *Educational Field Experience 490* field experience in Ghana, Africa during spring and summer academic terms. The Faculty also offers an *Educational Field Experience 450* field experience in Macau each winter term. This field experience in Macau counts as one of two required field experience placements.



### ***The Two (Required) Field Experiences Terms***

The first field experience is called the *Introductory Professional Term*. It includes a five-week placement in a school and typically occurs early in the student's program. Based on program route requirements, Student Teachers are assigned to schools where practicing teachers have volunteered to provide mentorship (i.e., Mentor Teachers). The *Introductory Professional Term* is an intense one, as students are enrolled in four condensed courses. The first week of their placement occurs before their coursework is completed and is referred to as an Observation Week. It is designed to provide a context for the content of the courses in which students are enrolled. For example, all students are required to take *Educational Policy Studies 310- Managing the Learning Environment* within their *Introductory Professional Term*. Professors/instructors of the *Educational Policy Studies 310* provide students with observation instruments and strategies for examining classroom management practices, and for reflecting upon their own developing teaching philosophy. Upon completion of their condensed courses, Student Teachers return to their assigned school placements for four consecutive weeks. By the end of placement, Student Teachers will have assumed approximately 50% of their Mentor Teacher's teaching assignment. The Mentor Teacher assigns a pass/fail at the end of the Student Teacher's field experience, which appears as a Credit/Non Credit course on the student's transcript.

The *Advanced Professional Term* is the final required student teaching experience for University of Alberta Student Teachers. The *Advanced Professional Term* field experience is comprised of nine consecutive weeks in a school and requires Student Teachers to gradually assume up to 80% of their Mentor Teacher's classroom duties. As with the *Introductory Professional Term* students are assigned a pass/fail grade by their Mentor Teacher. In both the *Introductory* and *Advanced Professional Terms*, the final evaluation of the field experience is a descriptive assessment in the form of a written document, a copy of which is placed in the Student Teacher's academic file.

### ***The "Day-to-Day" and Administration of the Field Experiences***

In any given year personnel in Undergraduate Student Services make 2200 Student Teacher placements, and arrange for the Student Teachers to be supervised throughout their field experiences. Other services provided to Student Teachers through the Undergraduate Student Services office include program advisement, and psychological counseling when requested by the Student Teacher. The Undergraduate Student Services office also administers admissions, maintenance of student records, and assesses students' eligibility to convocate and receive teacher certification in the province of Alberta.

### ***Undergraduate Student Services and School Personnel Involved in the Field Experiences***

Undergraduate Student Services personnel directly or indirectly involved in the field experiences include: the Dean, two Associate Deans (academics), one Assistant Dean, three Field Placement Officers, 8 teachers seconded from local school districts to be Field Experience Associates, and approximately 100 University Facilitators who liaise between the schools and the Faculty. In the schools there is a School Coordinator and Mentor Teachers who in all cases are identified and supervised by the principal or his/her designate. Following

is a brief description of the roles performed by those most closely involved in the field experiences.

#### Assistant Dean

“The Assistant Dean (Field Experiences) is responsible for all matters related to student teaching and field experiences courses. Field Experiences staff arrange for cooperating teachers and University Facilitators who work with students regularly during the *Introductory* and *Advanced Professional Terms*” (University of Alberta calendar S 73.3). The Assistant Dean is the direct supervisor of the 8 Field Experiences Associates. The position is a term position, most often occupied for two to three years.

#### Field Experiences Associates

Field Experience Associates are practicing teachers who apply to the Faculty and are selected from a pool of candidates “who have demonstrated their excellence in teaching at the elementary and secondary school levels” (section 70, University of Alberta calendar). Successful applicants are seconded from their school districts to the University of Alberta for 1-2 years. The Field Experience Associates work with the Assistant Dean to provide supervision of Student Teacher field experiences in both the greater Edmonton area, as well as in regional (rural) communities in the Northern half of Alberta. Typically, one Field Experience Associate oversees 100-120 Student Teachers in urban placements, and roughly 50 in regional placements. In addition to providing support to Student Teachers, University Facilitators, and school personnel, Field Experience Associates teach within the Faculty. Teaching assignments vary depending upon individual expertise and interest, but most first-year Field Experience Associates are encouraged to teach the classroom management course (*Educational Policy Studies 310*) that is required as part of the *Introductory Professional Term*.

#### University Facilitators

University Facilitators include professors, sessional instructors, and graduate students from within the Faculty. That said, the majority of the 100-120 University Facilitators involved in any academic term are retired teachers and administrators who in most cases were involved with the University of Alberta field experiences program during their careers in the field. University Facilitators visit and observe Student Teachers in the schools at least once a week during their *Introductory Professional Term* and *Advanced Professional Term* field placement. University Facilitators arrange weekly meetings where all the Student Teachers within a given school come together to discuss and share issues and questions. University Facilitators complete weekly reports for each Student Teacher that are submitted to Undergraduate Student Services; they also attend bi-weekly meetings called by their assigned Field Experience Associate where program information and requirements are reviewed and current news from the Faculty is shared. The University Facilitator’s chief responsibility is to support the student teaching experience, by helping both Student and Mentor Teachers best understand the requirements and expectations of field experiences at the University of Alberta.

### School Coordinators

School Coordinators are teaching staff within each placement school designated by the principal to facilitate school tours for Student Teachers, provide handbooks, guidelines for dress code and school wide initiatives, and introduce the Student Teachers at staff meetings. The role and responsibilities of the School Coordinator vary from school to school. In some cases, School Coordinators plan professional development opportunities in which Student Teachers can participate during lunch hours or after-school. When the Faculty experiences a shortage of volunteer Mentor Teachers in any given academic term, School Coordinators are often contacted and work with their principals to recruit eligible mentors.

### Mentor Teachers

Each spring, recruitment packages are sent to schools, encouraging teachers to mentor either *Introductory Professional Term* (5 week) or *Advanced Professional Term* (9 week) Student Teachers. Mentor Teachers are teachers who have continuous contracts, and in most cases have been teaching for a minimum of five years. Mentor Teachers are selected based on the recommendation of their principals.

## **Analysis of the Field Experiences Program at the University of Alberta**

In a previous section we provided an overview of some of the existing literature about field experiences research. We noted seminal works underpinning how field experiences should be conceptualized, and outlined some of the weaknesses that contribute to tensions in the work of field experiences. In the following, we frame our analysis of the field experiences program at the University of Alberta using the five weaknesses and tensions that we identified, and highlight what we consider to be strengths of the Bachelor of Education and field experiences programs at the University of Alberta.

The first weakness we identified was the tendency to conduct field experiences in isolation and independently of other components of the teacher education program. In the mid-1990s, the University of Alberta experienced pressure from the Alberta Government and school partners to revise its undergraduate Bachelor of Education program and establish stronger links between the Faculty of Education and the field. The revised program, which is the current program, has several features intended to enhance the integration of the field experiences as one of several key components of the teacher education program. For example, in the mid-1990s, Faculty Council, the chief governance structure in the Faculty of Education, voted to establish the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Council whose chief responsibility is decision-making and the overall management of the undergraduate program. Included on the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Council are elected and appointed representatives from the four academic departments responsible for the undergraduate course offerings, representatives from the Undergraduate Student Services Office and the Undergraduate Students' Education Association, and a representative from the Alberta Teachers' Association. Included in the membership as well are the Associate Dean, Academic, and the Assistant Dean of Field Experiences. At its regular monthly meetings, the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Council

makes decisions regarding the content and coordination of the undergraduate program. Two years ago, for example, the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Council struck a Field Experiences Ad Hoc committee to investigate and recommend to council a standardized curriculum for, and optimum placement of the field experience in the *Introductory Professional Term*. This ad hoc committee is currently in the process of drafting a policy to standardize and guide the assessment of the field experiences component of the *Introductory* and *Advanced Professional Terms*. For more than a decade as well, the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Council has had in place the Introductory Professional Term Coordinating Committee. This ad hoc committee meets and makes recommendations to the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Council on an on-going basis regarding coherence, integration and relevancy of the course content and field experiences. The Curriculum Implementation Committee was formed in September 2008 and is the ad hoc committee of the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Council which has been working on the re-development of the undergraduate program, guided by the five principles approved by the Faculty Council in 2006. Once again these principles are: academic and scholarly rigour; pedagogical expertise; teacher identity; diverse contexts affecting students and teachers; and field experience. The goal of this committee and the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Council is to have in place by September 2010 a revised program that recognizes the centrality of field experiences in the preparation of teachers (Wilson, 1999) for our changing world (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Goodlad, 1994; Levin & Riffel, 1997).

A second weakness identified in the literature and outlined in the preceding section is the wide range of field experience programs that are not always contextualized or justified through empirical evidence. One initiative that has continued to grow and evolve at the University of Alberta began in the mid-1990s as a pilot project titled “The Collaborative Schools Project.” This initiative capitalized on the benefits of placing Student Teacher cohort groups in schools, and engaging an identified School Coordinator who assumed chief responsibility for welcoming, orienting, and coordinating the activities of the Student Teachers and their cohort during the school placement. For example, the School Coordinator arranged for each Student Teacher multiple short-term placements (of one or two days) in several classrooms within the school at the beginning of the practicum, and prior to a decision being made regarding each individual Student Teacher’s “official” placement for the duration of the field experience. During the initiation of the Collaborative Schools Model, University Facilitators also became vital contributors to the field experiences by informing Mentor Teachers of the expectations and standards of the field experiences program at the University of Alberta, by organizing and supporting the Student Teachers, by organizing regular cohort meetings in each school, and at times by arranging visitations across and between cohorts of Student Teachers when requested by schools.

A recurrent question that fuelled interesting discussion in the Faculty over time was, “how long is a project a project?” Within several years, the field experiences Collaborative Schools Project became, and remains, the overall model for the field experiences program at University of Alberta. The Collaborative Schools Model, both within the urban and rural placements, continues to be a model that we research, that we feel is a best-practice for our students, and that has brought commitment and support from schools and school districts. What began in the mid 1990s as a project involving six schools in the greater Edmonton area has become the norm at the University of Alberta. The results of this initiative speak to the challenge of contextualizing the field experience, and collecting empirical evidence over time as

a way to justify “why we do what we do”. Evidence collected over time supports as well an on-going analysis and adaptation of the Collaborative School Model. For example, over time schools, university staff, and Student Teachers have had a voice in how field experiences are arranged at the school level, and adjustments to the Collaborative Schools Model have been made based on the experiences of those who have been involved.

A third weakness identified in the literature and mentioned in the preceding section is a chronic theory-practice gap between the university-based coursework and research, and the daily routines of teachers (Beck & Kosnik, 2002a, 2002b; Ralph, 1994-1995; Rogman & Hopp, 1999; Russell, 2005; Volante, 2006). Also mentioned was that the gap is often accentuated by the lack of involvement of full-time faculty members. Though not in absolute terms, the Collaborative Schools Model has not only helped narrow what the literature acknowledges as the theory-practice gap; it has also helped, over time, in reducing fragmentation and enhancing coherence of the field experiences program in our Faculty. As well, based on on-going feedback from Student Teachers, the Collaborative Schools Model has given multi-faceted and multi-layered support in the learning experience transition from campus to schools.

We would also like to emphasize the central role of the Field Experience Associates in the development of the Collaborative Schools Model at the University of Alberta. In many ways, the role of the Field Experience Associate as it has evolved also seeks to remedy what we acknowledge is one of the chief weaknesses of our field experience program at the University of Alberta; namely the lack of involvement of full time faculty members. Specifically, the Field Experience Associates are critical in developing and fostering more effective partnerships between the university and the field, and in providing orientation and on-going support to School Coordinators, University Facilitators, Mentor Teachers, and Student Teachers. Worth note is that the majority of Field Experience Associates are either engaged in, or begin graduate level study as a part of their experience on-campus. During their 1-2 year secondment, Field Experience Associates become immersed in seminal and current teacher education literature and theory. From this, the Field Experience Associates are able to make connections between what is studied in the academy, and how that can be understood in the field. They then share this knowledge and insights with Student Teachers, University Facilitators, and Mentor Teachers. As a part of our original conference paper, Maureen Winter (former Field Experience Associate and current teacher with Edmonton Public Schools) wrote about her time as a Field Experience Associate. While beyond the scope of this paper, we feel her story speaks to our analysis of the University of Alberta teacher education program. We have included her full story as Appendix I in this paper. Like the Field Experience Associates, the work of the University Facilitators at the University of Alberta seeks to address the lack of involvement of full-time faculty in the field experience program at the University of Alberta. The in-service and support opportunities the University of Alberta provides to its field partners through the work of the Field Experience Associates and University Facilitators is one more way we endeavour to address the theory-practice gap. For example, although there is no formal mechanism for preparing Mentor Teachers at the University of Alberta, workshops are offered each Fall and Winter by the Field Experiences Associates.

One way that the full-time faculty members in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta have taken up the challenge of bridging the theory-practice gap is through their participation in the Faculty-funded *Field Experience Projects Grants Program*. During the 2005-2006 academic term, there was a great deal of discussion within the Faculty about faculty member participation in the field experiences program. The discussion and debate led to the

initiation of the competitive *Field Experiences Projects Grants Program*. The stated purpose of this initiative is:

The Faculty believes it is important to have an academic presence in the field experiences component of the undergraduate teacher education program. The purpose of this field experiences initiative is to support faculty members in the development of projects that provide opportunity for two-way sharing of expertise and information between faculty and schools involved in our Faculty's field experiences work. (see: Appendix III)

Funded by the four teaching departments in the Faculty, this program has supported more than two dozen field experiences projects, and has been very well received by both faculty members and partners in the field. Projects typically involve faculty members developing and delivering workshops for teachers and students in one or more of the schools involved in our field experience program. For example, projects have included: teacher workshops focused on the implementation of new curricula in science, mathematics, and social studies; student workshops on social justice and diversity; hands-on professional development for teachers looking to use technology in their special education classes; professional development for urban and rural teachers wanting to become Mentor Teachers in our field experience program; and coaching and sports psychology in-services for both teachers and students.

The fourth weakness we identified above was the pervasive problem of inadequate communication and collaboration that persists among the various participants in the field experience program (Anderson & Lovejoy, 2000; Zeichner, 1996). The Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta has elected and appointed membership on three different cross-constituent committees that have as their aim to communicate and collaborate around issues of field experiences. The first, The Field Experience Advisory Committee is a standing committee of, and reports to the Faculty of Education's Undergraduate Academic Affairs Council. This committee includes elected and appointed members from the four teaching departments in the Faculty, and members from the Alberta Education, the Alberta Teachers' Association, the College of School Superintendents, Alberta School Boards Association, and a member from Campus Saint-Jean, the French-speaking campus at the University of Alberta. The Field Experience Advisory Committee meets five times a year to discuss a variety of field experience issues including Student Teachers' competencies (e.g., knowledge, skills, and attitudes) and professionalism. The second committee the Faculty of Education participates in is the Edmonton Area Field Experience Committee. Hosted by the Alberta Teachers' Association, this committee meets five or six times during the academic year. Membership on this committee includes elected representatives from the school divisions in the greater Edmonton area that take University of Alberta Student Teachers. Again, this committee discusses a variety of topics and innovations in teacher education, exchanges accounts regarding the school and university experiences with the Student Teachers and their placements, and collaborates to resolve issues in the field experience. Our Faculty of Education also participates with the other two public universities in Alberta with teacher education programs in an annual meeting of the Joint Committee on the Practicum, and in bi-annual meetings of the Teacher Education and Qualifications Committee. The Deans of Education also meet twice a year with the Deputy Ministers of Education and Advanced Education, along with other representatives of the various departments in Alberta Education. There is representation from the Alberta Teachers' Association, and the Teacher Certification

Branch of the Alberta Government on both of these committees. At all of these provincial meetings, members exchange ideas and perspectives on the “state of the art” in teacher education, field experiences, and teacher certification in the province of Alberta. Overall, we would emphasize that there are numerous structures and venues to communicate and collaborate with the various partners in teacher education and field experiences. That said, there are inherent tensions between and among the philosophies of the various stakeholders that can lead to questions and discussion around teacher education governance. In his article, *Teacher Education Governance, Policy, and the Role of the University*, Grimmatt (2008) claimed that the role of universities in teacher education is distinct from the roles of the profession, school boards, and government. He argued that “research and critique are powerful contributions that universities can make” (p. 49). Citing Vidovich (2007), he emphasized that “teacher educators can engage in a form of policy analysis that explicitly links the ‘bigger picture’ of global and national policy contexts to the ‘smaller pictures’ of policies and practices within schools and classrooms” (p. 49). By way of illustration, our Faculty of Education has participated in the planning and organization of two provincial symposia focused specifically on teacher induction. Other participants involved in planning these symposia included representatives from the other faculties of education at universities in Alberta, from Alberta Education, the College of School Superintendents, and the Alberta Teachers’ Association. The second symposia, held in November 2007 drew together educators and beginning teachers from both rural and urban school jurisdictions from across Alberta to discuss the theory and practice of teacher induction programs. The one-day conference was facilitated by Drs. Gordon McIntosh and Randy Wimmer from the University of Alberta. The opening keynote address and the closing synthesis of the day were given by Dr. David Pimm, another colleague from the University of Alberta with international research expertise in teacher induction programming. Proceedings from that conference (McIntosh & Wimmer, 2008) were distributed electronically to school jurisdictions across the province and have supported the development and implementation of numerous teacher induction programs. As well, the conference proceedings have been used as a text in graduate courses at the University of Alberta.

A further illustration is the participation of our Faculty of Education in this national conference on the field experiences within teacher education programs. Our participation and the conference proceedings, we contend, will support us in our role of bringing best “research and critique” to dialogue and collaboration with our partners aimed at addressing the weaknesses and inherent tensions in the field experiences program at the University of Alberta and beyond.

The fifth and final persistent weakness that we identified above was the lack of a clear and coherent supervisory model to guide the mentorship process during the Student Teacher’s field experiences (Goodlad, 1994; Janssen, Landolt & Grunfeld, 2003; Ralph, Walker & Wimmer, 2008). In the preceding section titled *Teacher Education and Field Experiences at the University of Alberta* and in our discussion of the weaknesses and inherent tensions in the field experience program at the University of Alberta we acknowledged that there are few full-time faculty directly involved in the “day-to-day” supervision of the Student Teachers in the schools. We also pointed out the high level of support and structured supervision that our Student Teachers receive within the Collaborative School Model. The Assistant Dean works with the Field Experience Associates who meet regularly with the University Facilitators to communicate information and expectations of the field experience program in our Collaborative School Model. The University Facilitators meet regularly with the School

Coordinators, Mentor Teachers, and Student Teachers to communicate information and expectations, and resolve issues as they arise. If and when Student Teachers encounter issues around supervision during their practicum, they can also speak in confidence and anonymity with the Director of Student Support in our Faculty, who is also a teacher and chartered psychologist and counsellor. In spite of all these personnel tasked with supporting the Student Teachers during their practicum, issues of coherence and mentorship can arise. Research points to the centrality of the relationship between Student and Mentor teachers to the success of the supervisory experience during the practicum (Rajuan, Beijaard, Verloop, 2008; Russell, 5; Volante, 2006). Yet Mentor Teachers in our field experiences program are nominated by their principals and are essentially “volunteers.” Workshops on effective mentoring are offered through our Faculty and through the Alberta Teachers’ Association, but are not required training or pre-requisite to taking a Student Teacher. Over the past several years, our Faculty of Education has been challenged regarding the assumption that a classroom teacher with five years of successful teaching experience has the necessary skills to mentor and supervise a Student Teacher. In 2006-2007, for example, at the request of the field and the profession, the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta introduced a graduate course that takes up academic themes and issues in teacher preparation and induction. Entitled *Educational Policy Studies 532 – Topics in Supervision: Preparation, Mentorship, and Induction of Student and Beginning Teachers*, the course has been offered five times to more than 85 practitioners enrolled in a master’s program or in open studies at the University of Alberta. (see: Appendix II). This course is aimed directly at ameliorating many of the concerns and issues identified in the literature, and in supporting the professional development of current and prospective Mentor Teachers involved in the University of Alberta field experiences program. Although not a panacea, many of the Mentor teachers who have taken the course claim to have increased their confidence and supervision and mentorship skills.

In defense of the majority of our full-time faculty not being directly involved in the supervision of Student Teachers’ field experiences, we feel it important to emphasize what Grimmett (2008) claimed is the role of universities in teacher education governance. We believe that through the numerous and on-going research projects and centres dedicated to teacher education, and through our teaching and Field Experiences projects, colleagues in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta are contributing to, and supportive of the belief that field experiences are the core component of teacher education programs.

### **Field Experiences in Teacher Education at the University of Alberta and Beyond: What Could Be**

In the preceding, we have described “what is” the state of the art in research on field experiences in teacher education, and examined some of the strengths, weaknesses and inherent tensions in our field experiences program at the University of Alberta. In what follows, we conclude with what we feel “could be” possible future directions for field experiences in teacher preparation at the University of Alberta and beyond.

Though the term “modernization” may initially elicit an industrial frame of reference, it may also provide a useful framework for looking at what is possible – even preferable – within current structures of educational practice. Modernization or a basic “updating and expansion”



can apply, as we are thoughtful about the mandate, scope, and “methods” of educational practice, in this case with application to preservice teacher education. In teacher education it is within the field experiences the impact of moving to revitalized theory, curriculum and programming content, and practice are most profound. A fifth persistent weakness that appears to arise in the delivery of many field experiences is the lack of a clear and coherent supervisory model to guide the mentorship process (Goodlad, 1994; Janssen, Landolt & Grunfeld, 2003; Ralph, Walker & Wimmer, 2008). One area that serves the University of Alberta faculty members well as we continue to explore the reform of our teacher education program, is the individual and collaborative research work going on in our own Faculty, as well as in other Faculties of Education in Canada and beyond. Our faculty members recognize the strength and potential of conducting research across disciplines and professional schools, and recognizes that technology integration is key to this process.

Without question the mandate of teacher education has broadened over the past decades as the context of classrooms and the needs of young learners have evolved in remarkable ways. It is well known that classrooms encompass children with learning needs that include cognitive/psychological challenges, physical/medical limitations, and wide differences in cultural background, first language, and emotional/family stability. The breadth of understanding and responsiveness required of teachers has expanded accordingly. The vital need to have teachers become active citizens in a globalized context, understanding the needs of students from across the world in deep and meaningful ways is also clear, as they must gain deeper knowledge and acceptance of the ways teaching/learning can differ in children from other cultures, and also a sense of social justice and a commitment to citizenship. The rather awe inspiring task that we ask of teachers in taking on these broadened demands has direct implications for teacher preparation. Our presentation of theory, curriculum, research-based knowledge, and access to a broader range of practical experiences is necessary to help address the complexity of demands that teachers currently meet, and in the future will meet in classrooms in our *changing world* (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Goodlad, 1994; Levin & Riffel, 1997).

As Wimmer (2008) has suggested, teachers are aligned with other professionals in being challenged to maintain the integrity and currency of their work within a rapidly changing world. The very nature of professions reflects the diversity and complexity of the world and societies in general. We have the opportunity to learn from, and with, other professions in ways that teacher education has not to date taken up. In the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, we might use existing models of inter-professional learning that have been taken up within the health sciences, wherein undergraduate students in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, rehabilitation medicine, and other related professions are taught within cohorts and engage in coursework that exemplifies the real world wherein their professions work together. In that teachers are increasingly working as members of inter-professional teams that include social workers, speech therapists, physiotherapists, law enforcement, and so on, this model may be seen to have direct application. Using the format of these inter-professional courses, it would be both exciting and ground breaking to invite other professions to participate within a particular seminar, class, or other “context of learning” with preservice teachers. Discussions and planning around such an initiative would take us into new learning and growth within teacher education in general, but also specifically within field experiences possibilities.

As an example of the possible “give and take” that such interactions across professions and Faculties might bring, recent experience involving the Faculty of Education and the Health

Sciences Faculties at the University of Alberta suggests that educators can provide helpful input to our colleagues regarding learning theory, curriculum development and assessment, and that similarly we can learn much from the enhancements that are moving quickly within the health sciences professions using inter-professional formats as well as simulations and other sophisticated methods of integrating technology. At the University of Alberta over the past two years, the Faculty of Education has been involved in an inter-disciplinary project with the Health Sciences Faculties centred around the development of a Master's Program in Health Sciences Education. The genesis of this idea evolved from the contributions of Education faculty members to an interdisciplinary course within which Health Sciences students learn together in cohorts and have a focus on interdisciplinary communication and learning. Similarly, one of our professors has been involved in an ever growing initiative to introduce the power of narrative inquiry and narrative processes within the professional program for medical doctors. Our Faculty of Education has been able to contribute to the Health Sciences curriculum in meaningful ways, and through this process have become aware of opportunities to broaden the range of practical learning experiences through observation and participation in the Health Sciences context. For example, the use of simulations with mock patients, simulated emergencies, and simulations involving mannequins has brought us the realization that we might within teacher education be able to better use technological advances to provide our preservice teachers with many more examples of the broad range of classroom behaviours, demands, and modelled excellence than we would ever be able to provide in our field experiences placements, alone. In addition to the doors that may open as we discuss inter-professional learning contexts for our preservice teachers, there are exciting discussions ahead that may include ways to use "simulations of the student teacher field experience through up to date video or interactive connections with teachers and students in classrooms, and not always demanding a school placement per se. It is exciting times to contemplate future innovation and research in teacher education and field experiences. In conclusion we argue that the time is "right" to compare, contrast, and study practicum programs in teacher education from a more holistic, global, and across discipline perspective.

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## ***APPENDIX I***

### **The Promise of Field Experience Associates: *Maureen's Story* (Maureen Winter)**

As I write this piece, I have just recently returned to my school district after completing a three-year secondment to the University of Alberta. I left my role as Assistant Principal to pursue the professional development opportunities that were inherent in the role of Field Experiences Associate. I was excited about the opportunities to work with preservice teachers and the challenges of an organization that was quite different from my experiences in the school system. The team of eight seconded teachers, Associate Dean, Assistant Dean and the Placement Coordinators together provided the most collaborative environment I had ever experienced. There was time to discuss ideas, philosophies and to truly reflect on the work that we did. Now, at the end of my term as a Field Experience Associate, I am looking back at the promises the secondment held and looking ahead at the possibilities that my experiences will continue to provide.

For me, one of the most valuable components of the Field Experience Associate role was as instructor. I valued the opportunity to connect with students in small classes, and to work with adult learners who were passionate about their potential as teachers. Based on my special education teaching experiences, I had the opportunity to work with the Department of Educational Psychology and undergraduates who were working toward a minor in Special Education. My own classroom and administrative experiences gave me street credibility with my students. As I shared my experiences about the rewards and challenges of working in the field of special education, I was able to promote linkages to the theory that students were reading about in their course materials. I sought opportunities to integrate practices and beliefs from the field with the theory of the course that I taught. I believe having seconded teachers as instructors provides a mechanism for bridging the theory-practice gap that has been identified in the literature as a weakness in field experiences (Wimmer, 2008). Recent administrative changes within Undergraduate Student Services at the University of Alberta have resulted in a move to increased teaching responsibilities for Field Experience Associates in 2009-2010. Based on the research, this probably is a move in the right direction (Benyon, 2004).

As I developed relationships with the students over the course of each term from 2006-2009 through dialogue, classroom discussions, and individual meetings, I was able to “draw in students’ histories for connecting them with the existing curriculum” (Benyon, 2004, p. 112). I worked closely with the Placement Coordinators to capitalize on student expertise in specific areas of special education, and together we found the best fit for the Student Teachers’ field experiences placements. Collaborating with the Placement Coordinators, I feel we developed a system to effectively place the Education Field Experience 426 (Special Education) Student Teachers. With more information and input from students on their strengths and areas of interest, best placements were made for the preservice teachers – and in the end schools and students benefitted too. I have stayed in touch with many of my former students, and it has been rewarding to hear of their successful field experiences, interviews, and job offers upon graduation. The possibility exists that finding a ‘best match’ for their field experience may have contributed in some way to their motivation and success.



Within the current supervision model, very few Field Experience Associates provide direct support to Student Teachers. Yet the role of University Facilitator provides front-line exposure to the challenges and tensions that are faced by both Mentor Teachers and students alike during the field experience. In my last year as a Field Experience Associate, I chose to act as a University Facilitator for two students in one school. I believe that by assuming this role, I gained better insight into how to support and provide guidance to the University Facilitators that I supervised directly. This is not unlike principals and administrators that have current classroom experience providing support to their teachers. Theoretical and research literature would suggest it is valuable to speak and lead from a position of experience (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2006).

The fluid nature of two-year teacher secondments ensures that innovation and change are ongoing. As one group of Field Experience Associates transitions back to school districts, new leaders emerge within the Field Experience Associate team each year. The collaborative team of Field Experience Associates could be described as a cult of personality. The individual strengths of each Field Experience Associate are cultured and provided with numerous opportunities to shine. “The associates themselves thrive in this collaborative environment, which places them in the creative challenge of reformulating and articulating what they know about teaching and learning in order to construct a teacher education program that communicates this knowledge” (Beynon, 2004, p. 112). That said, the constant change within the Field Experience Associate team can also result in a lack of continuity. Beynon (2004) reports on this in her work. The constant flux I admit is a worry to me at this time, because while my expertise is Special Education, I am uncertain if there is currently a person on the Field Experience Associate team with the interest or inclination to continue the processes that I began.

Beynon (2004) states that the “latitude and freedom for decision-making implicitly communicates trust in the Field Experience Associates’ abilities to think critically, and it validates their experiences, resourcefulness, professionalism, and creativity” (2004, p 112). For true reform to occur in our field experiences, however, I believe the input and innovations that Field Experience Associates bring to the university environment need a vehicle that validates and moves forward their contributions. Decisions at the university level continue to be made through Faculty Councils and committees made up of tenured staff who may or may not have experience with the field component of the teacher education program. My three year experience as an Field Experience Associate leads me to believe that the positions of Associate Deans, and Assistant Dean Field Experiences are critical in taking forward the truly innovative ideas that the Field Experience Associates bring to the teacher education program, and moving the reform agenda along. One tension that exists is that as term positions end and new people fill the roles of Field Experience Associates and the Assistant and Associate Deans, change is inevitable. The concern, however, is that there is seldom any stability or standardization in field experiences processes with this model. As an example, during the 2007-2008 University term, Undergraduate Student Services at the University of Alberta proposed a pilot project, where two second year Field Experience Associates would continue in their role for a third year. Although many would agree having two third year Field Experience Associates moved some of the field experiences processes closer to a standardized process, the decision was made to return to two year secondments. This decision makes we wonder – is “innovation” sacrificed for “stability” and “standardization” or vice versa? It seems to me if we are going to achieve true reform in the teacher education and field experience program, the debate needs to shift

from “either/or” thinking to “both/and.” How can we build the field experience component of our program in such a way to provide stability as well as on-going innovation?

### ***Moving Out and Moving On***

In the fourteen years I have been an educator, I have had the opportunity to assume the role of Field Experiences Associate, University Facilitator, School Coordinator/Assistant Principal and Mentor Teacher. While these experiences have provided me with incredible insights into mentoring and teacher education – nothing could have prepared me for my transition from Field Experience Associate back to school and the classroom environment where I now find myself. As I struggle to “reconfigure my professional identity” (Beynon, 2004, p.89) I am exploring the promises and possible insights into what I learned over the last three years. How am I changed as a mentor? How can I encourage and support my fellow mentors in the school? How can I build trust that enables our school (and district) to be open to new ideas and research possibilities?

Upon my return to the classroom, I tread softly for I am ‘just a teacher’. My experiences as a Field Experiences Associate have provided me with insights and perspectives about what Student Teachers face as they navigate the chasm between the field and their university experience. I am a mentor for a beginning teacher, and I will host a Student Teacher in my classroom this fall. I believe in the value of mentoring, and I will encourage my colleagues to assume this role, for I believe it is a powerful form of professional development and our school will be richer for the experience. No one in my district, be it personnel or administrator, has talked with me about the transformation I underwent in the Field Experiences Associate role I held for the last three years. I have changed – but when or will this be acknowledged and celebrated? I was told when I accepted the secondment that it would be a “feather-in-my-cap”. But what does that mean? For now, I am a ‘small-L leader’ in my school – and that is just fine with me, for I find my classroom of 25 grade five students in the school where I was an “official” leader just three years ago to be a grounding experience. My identity as “teacher” and “teacher leader” is once again shifting.

Perhaps my own ‘legacy’ will come as I complete my graduate studies. I plan to continue to foster my relationships with my colleagues at the University, because I believe that what is needed to improve field experiences is a true, collaborative process – complete with dialogues and tensions. I am aware of the Field Experience projects (see: Appendix II) currently administered through Undergraduate Student Services that provide a link between classrooms and the University, and I would welcome and encourage a research project into my classroom. I believe these projects should be expanded as they provide a real-life connection between the University and the field. Research conducted in classrooms with Mentor Teachers, Student Teachers and children has the potential to provide valuable information to stakeholders as well as those intent on reform. Most importantly, however, I believe the Field Experience projects can help build and solidify the positive relationships that currently exist.

## ***APPENDIX II***

**University of Alberta, Faculty of Education  
Department of Educational Policy Studies  
Fall 2008**

**EDPS 532: Selected Topics in Educational Supervision:  
*Preparation, Mentorship and Induction of Student and Beginning Teachers*  
Tuesdays 6:00 – 9:00pm  
Classroom: Ed North 7-114**

**Instructor:**

**Dr. Rosemary Foster  
Office: Education North 7-147  
Phone: 492-0760  
E-Mail: ryfoster@ualberta.ca  
Office Hours: By Appointment**

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**Course Description:**

This course will help educators increase their knowledge about the challenges and issues surrounding the preparation, mentorship and induction of student and beginning teachers into the teaching profession. The course begins with an examination of current research on teacher education programs. Students will learn about the Faculty of Education's review of its teacher preparation program. The course will also help students increase their understanding of teacher induction programs and practices as presented in the research literature, as well as innovative teacher induction and mentorship programming going on in the province of Alberta. Topics covered in the course will be highly relevant to: (a) teachers, administrators, and graduate students who are currently mentoring student teachers and/or beginning teachers, and (b) school-based field experience coordinators, university facilitators, school administrators and graduate students who would like to know more about the preparation, mentorship and induction of student and beginning teachers.

Students will be asked to explore different theories, ideologies, and models in the academic and professional education literature that inform teacher education programs and the practice of mentorship and induction of student and beginning teachers. Readings, class discussion, guest speakers, and assignments will help students critically assess teacher education and induction programs in relation to their own contexts and experiences.

The course reflects a number of assumptions:

- Teacher preparation and induction programs should prepare student and beginning teachers to deal with a diverse and changing world, and provide the knowledge, skills and attributes to maximize the social well-being and life chances of all children.
- Reflection and analysis of personal experiences are key in the professional development of educators in all stages of the career cycle (e.g., novice through expert)

- “Good mentorship” is an important dimension of preparation and induction into the profession and “good teaching”
- Preparation, mentorship and induction of student and beginning teachers include both formative and summative supervision and evaluation.

### **Course Objectives:**

The assigned readings, class discussion, guest speaker presentations, and assignments have been chosen to help students:

- Examine and evaluate current research and thinking on teacher preparation, mentorship and induction programs.
- Develop an in-depth understanding of their own values, assumptions and beliefs about teaching, teacher preparation, and the role of mentorship in the supervision and induction of student and beginning teachers.
- Familiarize themselves with theories on initial teacher preparation and supervision, mentorship and teacher induction and professional development.
- Critically examine current trends and issues related to teacher preparation, mentorship, supervision and induction of student and beginning teachers.

### **Course Content:**

Students will be encouraged to work toward the attainment of the course objectives:

- Through their preparation for, and engagement in class discussions based on assigned readings and guest speaker presentations.
- Through their written accounts of personal experiences.
- Through their scholarly critique of the readings. Students will be required to log their critique of the assigned readings and will lead class discussions based on the themes presented in the readings.
- Through their completion of the course assignments (e.g., weekly review of assigned readings, personal accounts, major assignment).

### **Organization of Course:**

The course is organized around 10 main topics:

- Exploring values, beliefs, and assumptions about “good” teaching, “good” teachers, and learning to teach.
- Conceptual links across the university curriculum.
- Theory-practice links between school and university settings.
- Social-cultural links amongst participants in teacher education programs.
- Personal links that shape the identity of teacher educators.
- Teacher education research and reform in Canada and at the University of Alberta
- From student teacher to beginning teacher: Teacher mentoring and induction
- Developing and designing mentoring and induction programs
- Mentoring constructs and best practices
- Connecting teacher preparation, mentoring and induction to broader educational issues

**Required Texts and Readings:**

Students will be **required** to purchase the following texts. They will be available for purchase at the University Bookstore:

- Hoban, G. (Ed.). (2005). *The missing links in teacher education design: Developing a multi-conceptual framework*. Dordrecht, NL: Springer.
- Portner, H. (Ed.). (2005). *Teacher mentoring and induction: The state of the art and beyond*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

The following two documents will also be **required** and are available free of charge in electronic format.

- Alberta Education. (February, 2008). *Teacher induction practices: A collaborative initiative*. Involving: University of Alberta, University of Calgary, University of Lethbridge, Concordia University College, The Alberta Teachers' Association, College of Alberta School Superintendents, Alberta Education.
- Falkenberg, T., & Smits, H. (May, 2008). *Mapping research in teacher education in Canada: Proceedings of the working conference on research in teacher education in Canada, November 1-3, 2007*. Winnipeg, MB: Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

In addition to the above, the following texts are **highly recommended but not required**.

- Cochrane-Smith, M., Feiman-Nemser, S., McIntyre, E., & Demers, K. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring questions in changing contexts*. New York, NY: Routledge and the Association of Teacher Educators.
- Dangel, J. (Ed.). (2006). *Research on teacher induction*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Education.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). *Powerful teacher education: Lessons from exemplary programs*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

The following articles from scholarly journals are **recommended but not all required**. **This will be explained during the first class meeting.**

- Borko, H., Liston, D., & Whitcomb, J. (2006). A conversation of many voices: Critiques and visions of teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 57 (3), 199-204.
- \*Cherian, F. (2007). Learning to teach: Teacher candidates reflect on the relational, conceptual, and contextual influences of responsive mentorship. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 30 (1), 25-46.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2006). Introduction to the double issues: Evidence, efficacy and effectiveness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 57 (2), 95-101.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Constructing 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 57 (3), 300-314.
- \*Fenwick, T. (2003). Chapter 2: What is the theoretical base? Different conceptions of experiential learning. In T. Fenwick, *Learning through experience: Troubling orthodoxies and interesting questions* (pp. 21-43). Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company.

- \*Goddard, J., & Foster, R. (2001). The experiences of neophyte teachers: A critical constructivist assessment. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17 (3), 349-365.
- Grossman, P. (2008). Responding to our critics: From crisis to opportunity in research on teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59 (1), 10-23.
- Hammerness, K., Darling-Hammond, L., Bransford, J., Berliner, D., Cochran-Smith, M., McDonald, M., & Zeichner, K. (2005). How teachers learn and develop. In L. Darling-Hammond and J. Bransford (Eds.). *Preparing teachers for a changing world* (pp. 358-389). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hasinoff, S., & Mandzuk, D. (2005). Bonding, bridging, and becoming a teacher: Student cohorts and teacher identity. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 51 (3), 231-245.
- Kutcy, C., & Schulz, R. (2006). Why are beginning teachers frustrated with the teaching profession? *McGill Journal of Education*, 41 (1), 31-40.
- Levin, B., & He, Y. (2008). Investigating the content and sources of teacher candidates' personal practical theories (PPTs). *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59 (1), 55-68.
- Liston, D., Whitcomb, J., & Borko, H. (2006). Too little or too much: Teacher preparation and the first years of teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 57 (4), 351-358.
- Marable, M., & Raimondi, S. (2007). Teachers' perceptions of what was most (and least) supportive during their first year of teaching. *Mentoring and Tutoring*, 15 (1), 25-37.
- \*Moore Johnson, S., & Birkeland, S. (2003). Pursuing a "sense of success": New teachers explain their career decisions. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40 (3), 581-618.
- \*Ralph, E., Wimmer, R., & Walker, K. (2008, June). Clinical and practicum education in the professions: The student voice. In A. Wright, S. Murray, & M. Wilson (Eds.). *CELT: Collected essays on learning and teaching*. Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, University of Windsor.
- \*Ralph, E., Walker, K., & Wimmer, R. (in press). The clinical/practicum experience in professional preparation: Preliminary findings. Montréal. *McGill Journal of Education*.
- Santoro, N., & Allard, A. (2008). Scenarios as springboards for reflection on practice: Stimulating discussion. *Reflective Practice*, 9 (2), 167-176.
- Smith, T., & Ingersoll, R. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(4), 681-714.
- Stotsky, S. (2006). Who should be accountable for what beginning teachers need to know? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 57 (3), 256-268.
- \*Volante, L. (2006). Essential elements in teacher education: Preservice student perspectives. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 52 (2), 167-180.
- Volante, L., & Fazio, X. (2007). Exploring teacher candidates' assessment literacy: Implications for teacher education reform and professional development. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 30 (3), 749-770.
- \*Wang, J., Odell, S., & Schwille, S. (2008). Effects of teacher induction on beginning teachers' teaching: A critical review of the literature. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(2), 132-152.

### **Class Format:**

The course is intended to build on students' experiences with teaching, mentorship, induction, and supervision and evaluation. Specifically, students will be encouraged to deepen their theoretical and practical understandings through (i) their written accounts of their personal experiences, (ii) their critical review of the assigned readings, (ii) their participation in class discussion, and (iii) their completion of course assignments. Students will be expected to come

to an enhanced understanding of their own assumptions/beliefs/values, and ground claims/arguments in the scholarly literature. A variety of instructional approaches will be used.

### Working in Groups:

Students will be asked to work in one of three **study groups** (GG-Green Group, BG-Blue Group, RG-Red Group). The intent here is twofold: (1) to expose students to a diversity of perspectives, and (2) to provide support for one another in accomplishing the objectives of the course. It is important that students prepare the assigned readings before the class. However, for class meetings where readings are discussed, each of the three study groups will be asked to prepare “in-depth” interpretations and discussion questions for ONE of the three assigned readings. During the class, study groups will present what they have prepared, raise questions, and lead the whole class in a 10-12 minute discussion. Prior to the discussions 20-30 minutes will be provided for study groups to prepare their presentations.

### Schedule of Topics and Readings:

DATE	TOPIC	PREPARATION (RG = Red Group; GG = Green Group; BG = Blue Group)
September 9	<p>Introductions and Course Overview</p> <p><b>Topic 1:</b> Exploring Values, Beliefs, and Assumptions about “Good” Teaching, “Good” Teachers and Learning to Teach: <i>What constitutes good teaching and how do student and beginning teachers learn to be good teachers?</i></p> <p>Course organization and selection of topics explained.</p> <p>Written personal accounts explained.</p> <p>Study group presentations explained.</p> <p>Assignments 1, 2 and 3 explained.</p>	<p><b>Personal account:</b> My views: What are the goals of public education? How would I characterize “good” teaching and the “good” teacher? What do I think are the qualities of a “good” teacher preparation program?</p>
September 16	<p><b>Topic 2:</b> Conceptual Links across the University Curriculum: <i>What should our teacher education programs be like and why?</i></p> <p>Study group discussion and presentations.</p>	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>RG- Phelan in Hoban (2005), ch. 4</p> <p>GG- LaBoskey in Hoban (2005), ch. 2</p> <p>BG – Kiggins, Cambourne &amp; Ferry in Hoban (2005), ch. 5</p>
September 23	<p><b>Topic 3:</b> Theory-Practice Links between School and University Settings: <i>What is the best way to integrate the theory of teaching and learning into practice?</i></p> <p>Personal accounts.</p> <p>Study group discussion and presentations.</p>	<p><b>Personal account:</b> My experiences as a student teacher/with student teachers.</p> <p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>GG- Russell in Hoban (2005), ch. 8</p> <p>BG- Freese in Hoban (2005), ch. 7</p> <p>RG- Green, Hamilton, Hampton &amp; Ridgeway in Hoban (2005), ch. 9</p>

<b>September 30</b>	<p><b>Topic 3:</b> Theory-Practice Links between School and University Settings: <i>What is the potential role of “student voice” in bridging the theory-practice gap?</i></p> <p>Student group discussion and presentations</p> <p>Guest speaker: Dr. Randy Wimmer</p>	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>BG- Russell (2008)</p> <p>RG- Ralph, Walker &amp; Rimmer (in press)</p> <p>GG- Ralph, Rimmer &amp; Walker (2008)</p>
<b>October 7</b>	<p><b>Topic 4:</b> Social-Cultural Links amongst Participants in the Teacher Education Program: <i>What is the importance of relationships and building a sense of community in a teacher education program? How can this be planned for and achieved?</i></p> <p>Personal accounts.</p> <p>Study group discussion and presentations.</p>	<p><b>Personal account:</b> My experiences of relationship and community building among student and beginning teachers. My experiences with the teaching profession more generally.</p> <p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>RG- Erickson, Darling &amp; Clarke in Hoban (2005), ch. 10</p> <p>GG- Kosnik &amp; Beck in Hoban (2005), ch. 12</p> <p>BG- Loughran, Berry &amp; Tudball in Hoban (2005), ch. 11</p>
<b>October 14</b>	<p><b>Topic 5:</b> Personal Links that Shape the Identity of Teachers: <i>Who are we as teachers? What is the connection between the “professional” and the “personal” in identity formation?</i></p> <p>Personal accounts.</p> <p>Study group discussion and presentations.</p>	<p><b>Personal account:</b> Who am I as a teacher? How has my sense of identity evolved from my time as a student teacher?</p> <p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>GG- Bullough in Hoban (2005), ch. 13</p> <p>BG- Pinnegar in Hoban (2005), ch. 14</p> <p>RG- Carson (2008)</p>
<b>October 21</b>	<p><b>Topic 6:</b> Teacher Education Research and Reform in Canada and at the University of Alberta: <i>What advice would you give in support of the design and implementation of the teacher education reforms at University of Alberta?</i></p> <p>Study group discussion of article and documents and response to the call for advice.</p> <p>Guest speaker: Dr. Norma Nocente.</p>	<p><b>Readings: (NO LOGS)</b></p> <p>ALL GROUPS- Falkenberg (2008)</p> <p>ALL GROUPS- Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE) <i>Accord on Initial Teacher Education in Canada</i> (2006)</p> <p>ALL GROUPS- University of Alberta, Faculty of Education documents: (1) Preservice Teacher Education Program Statement of Principles (2006); (2) Review of the Teacher Education Program (2007); (3) Proposed Vision Statement and Curriculum Framework (2008)</p>



<b>October 28</b>	<b>Topic 7:</b> From Student Teacher to Beginning Teacher: Teacher Mentoring and Induction- <i>How important is mentoring in the teacher induction process?</i> Personal accounts. Study group discussion and presentations.	<b>Personal account:</b> My experiences as a beginning teacher. My induction into the teaching profession. <b>Readings:</b> BG- Ganser in Portner (2005), ch. 1 RG- Bower in Portner (2005), ch. 2 GG- Casey & Claunch in Portner (2005), ch. 6.
<b>November 4</b>	<b>Topic 8:</b> Developing and Designing Mentoring and Induction Programs: <i>What are the characteristics of effective induction programs?</i> Study group discussion and presentations.	<b>Readings:</b> RG- Wong in Portner (2005), ch. 3 GG- Moir in Portner (2005), ch. 4 BG- Portner in Portner (2005), ch. 5
<b>November 11 (no class)</b>		
<b>November 18</b>	<b>Topic 9:</b> Mentoring Constructs and Best Practices: <i>What are the characteristics of a "good" mentorship relationship?</i> Personal accounts. Study group discussion and presentations.	<b>Personal account:</b> My memorable experiences of mentorship (e.g., mentor and/or mentee. What kind of mentor am I? Would I like to be? What would others say?) <b>Readings:</b> GG- Rowley in Portner (2005), ch. 7 BG- Sweeny in Portner (2005), ch. 8 RG- Lipton & Wellman in Portner (2005), ch. 9
<b>November 25</b>	<b>Topic 10:</b> Connecting Mentoring and Induction to Broader Issues: <i>What are some innovative teacher induction practices in Alberta and elsewhere? What are next steps?</i> Study group discussion and presentations. Guest speaker: Dr. Joyce Bainbridge, Dr. Peter Prinson, and Dorothy Stanley	<b>Readings: (NO LOGS)</b> ALL GROUPS- Britton & Paine in Portner (2005), ch. 12 ALL GROUPS- McIntosh & Wimmer (2008) <b>Due:</b> Reading Logs
<b>December 2</b>	Presentation of teacher education/teacher induction program within study groups. Personal accounts.	<b>Personal account:</b> Comments would make and questions I would raise about topics presented during the course. <b>Due:</b> Personal accounts and Major assignment.

**Evaluation:**

Students are encouraged to ask questions as they work through their assignments. Instructor support will be provided prior to the due dates.

***Assignment 1: Reading Log (40%)***

Students will maintain a reading log that includes an INDIVIDUAL set of **one-page reviews** of the assigned readings that document their understanding and learning. Expectations for these one-page logs, as well as format/template/example will be provided. The development of the reading log is intended (i) to prepare individuals for meaningful interaction in their study groups, (ii) to assist students in developing their skill at analysis and scholarly critique, and (iii) to help students in clarifying their practical and theoretical understandings. **Due: November 25, 2008** (Total = 24 one-page entries)

***Assignment 2: Written Personal Accounts (20%)***

Two key assumptions underpinning this course are:

- Reflection and analysis of personal experiences are key in the professional development of educators
- “Good mentorship” is an important dimension of “good teaching.”

This assignment was designed to reflect these assumptions and to that end, students will over the course of the term write **7 one-two page accounts** of their personal reflections and beliefs about the ten topics that comprise the course. Students will be asked to take part in an on-going class conversation where there is a sharing of reflections and beliefs. Students will also be asked to submit these accounts on an on-going basis throughout the course. The instructor will read and provide verbal and/or written feedback to individuals. In the instances where there are common themes in the accounts, the instructors will use these themes as prompts for general discussion in the class. At the end of the term, the students will be asked to submit the full set of accounts along with the reading log. This will support the instructors’ evaluation of students’ learning. Details concerning the precise requirements, format, and criteria for evaluation of the personal accounts will be discussed early in the course. **Due: on-going** throughout the term with complete set submitted **December 2, 2008** (Total = 7 one-two page accounts)

***Assignment 3: Major Paper – Teacher Education Program or Teacher Induction Program (40%)***

The objective of the **major individual assignment**, is to develop a two year teacher education program or a two-three year teacher induction program for the Albertan context. The beginning section of the paper will present a rationale for the proposed program and will incorporate aspects of the student’s written personal accounts as well as direct and explicit reference to the concepts and readings from the course. The rest of the paper should identify specific dimensions of the program. Again, the student should incorporate direct and explicit references to concepts, readings, and/or guest presentations. The student is expected to weave throughout the paper the role and importance of mentorship and mentoring in teacher preparation and/or induction. Again, direct and explicit references to course concepts, presentations and readings must be included. During the final class meeting, students will be asked to make a 5-10 minute presentation to their study group about their teacher education or induction program and entertain questions and discussion. Details concerning the precise requirements, format, and criteria for evaluation will be discussed early in the course. **Requirement:** Selectively incorporate at least 12 references from at least 3-4 different scholarly sources (these can include the 532 required and recommended readings). **Length:** 2400-3000 words (approximately 10 pages)

double-spaced), not including reference list. Please include word count. **Due: December 2, 2008.**

***General criteria applying to all assignments***

- relevant, specific, and substantive links to course content; explicit integration
- coherent development of ideas, argument/theme[s]; scope & focus
- fine-grained analysis and/or synthesis
- evidence of critical reflection
- concise, “high density” written expression
- clear, persuasive/argumentative writing style
- appropriate citation of references
- technical quality: organization and coherence, clarity of prose, spelling, grammar, punctuation, attention to detail, use of APA (5<sup>th</sup> edition) style.

N.B. Students are reminded that they are required to follow the University of Alberta Guidelines concerning:  
**Plagiarism and Cheating** ([www.ualberta.ca/~unisecr/appeals.htm](http://www.ualberta.ca/~unisecr/appeals.htm) )  
**Copyright** ([www.library.ualberta.ca/copyright/index.cfm](http://www.library.ualberta.ca/copyright/index.cfm))  
**Inclusive Language**  
 ([www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/education/nav04.cfm?nav04=14375&nav03=14371&nav02=14363&nav01=13191](http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/education/nav04.cfm?nav04=14375&nav03=14371&nav02=14363&nav01=13191) )  
 Grading System: Please see [www.grades.ualberta.ca](http://www.grades.ualberta.ca) for more detailed information about the University of Alberta letter grading system that was introduced in September 2003. According to the University of Alberta guidelines for 500-level courses (summary is below).

<b>RATING</b>	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>RECOMMENDED GRADE DISTRIBUTION IN GRADUATE CLASSES</b>
Outstanding/Excellent/Very Good	A+, A, A-	40%
Good	B+, B	33%
Satisfactory	B-, C+	22%
Unsatisfactory		5%

**Equity and Respect Statement:**

In our educational practices we are committed to the ethic of mutual respect. This ethic becomes evident through the use of inclusive language to create an atmosphere in which experiences and views of course participants are treated with respect and value in relation to gender, gender identity, racial background, sexual orientation, ethnic background, age, ability and other relationships of power. This ethic is reflective of a commitment to provide an environment of equality and respect for all people within the university community.

**Selected Bibliography:**

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- Alberta Teachers' Association. (2004). *Mentoring beginning teachers: Program handbook*. Edmonton, AB: Author.
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- Britzman, D. (2003). *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Borman, G., & Dowling, M. (2008). Teacher attrition and retention: A meta-analytic and narrative review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 78 (3), 367-409.
- Carson, T., & Sumara, D. (Eds.) (1998). *Action research as a living practice*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Clandinin, D. J. (Ed.). (2006). *Composing diverse identities: Inquiries into the interwoven lives of children and teachers*. London, England: Routledge.
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- Hammon, D., Olivarez, A., Lesley, M., Button, K., Chan, Y., Griffith, R., & Elliot, S. (2006). Pedagogical influence of interaction with cooperating teachers on the efficacy beliefs of student teachers. *The Teacher Educator*, 42 (1), 15-29.
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- Kochan, F., & Pascarelli, J. (2004). *Global perspectives on mentoring: Transforming contexts, communities and cultures*. Greenwich, England: Information Age Publications.
- Levine, A. (2006). *Educating school teachers*. Washington, DC: The Education Schools Project.
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- Leppard, S. (1992). *The Leppard mentorship model*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Alberta.
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- Scherer, M. (Ed.). (1999). *A better beginning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Seibert, C., Clark, A., & Kilbridge, A. (2006). When preservice teachers struggle or fail: Mentor teachers' perspectives. *Education*, 126 (3), 409-422.
- Sergiovanni, T., & Starratt, R. (2007). *Supervision: A redefinition* (8<sup>th</sup> ed). Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.
- Smith, T., & Ingersoll, R. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Educational Research Journal*, 41 (3), 681-714.
- Solomon, R. (2003). *Mentoring teachers in a professional learning community*. Columbia, MD: National Institute for Relationship Training.

### **Scholarly and Professional Journals**

Most of these are available through the Coutts library (many on-line).

Alberta Journal of Educational Research

Alberta Teachers' Association publications (ATA News, ATA Magazine, website)

Canadian Journal of Education

Curriculum and Inquiry

Educational Leadership

Educational Review

Journal of Teacher Education

McGill Journal of Education

Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnerships in Learning

Teacher and Teaching

Teaching and Teacher Education

Teacher College Record

The Teacher Educator

### **Professional Texts and Manuals**

There are many texts and manuals that provide "hands on" practical strategies for developing and implementing teacher induction and mentorship programs. Publication houses to check are: ASCD, Corwin Press, Jossey-Bass, Sage.

**APPENDIX III****FIELD EXPERIENCES PROJECTS**

**Faculty of Education  
University of Alberta  
Call for Submissions: Spring 2009**

**Purpose:** The Faculty believes it is important to have an academic presence in the field experiences component of the undergraduate teacher education program. The purpose of this field experiences initiative is to support faculty members in the development of projects that provide opportunity for two-way sharing of expertise and information between faculty and schools involved in our Faculty's field experiences work.

**Call for Submissions:** The next submission date for proposals will be Friday, March 27, 2009 and will be for projects running September 1, 2009 to August 31, 2010. There will be \$55,000 available for these projects. Applicants are requested not to begin projects prior to receiving approval. Successful applicants will be asked to complete their projects within the 12 month period outlined and submit a final report including results completed and budget spent (maximum two pages). Any unspent funds will be returned to the Field Experience Projects fund to support future projects. Project funding will be administered through Undergraduate Student Services.

**Submission of Proposals:** Applications will be received in Undergraduate Student Services (USS) and adjudicated by a committee comprised of elected representatives from the four departments and chaired by the Assistant Dean Field Experiences. Proposals will be judged on their overall quality according to criteria outlined below and their potential benefit to, and impact on the field.

Project proposals should be about two pages in length and should include the following headings: Purpose, Objectives, Anticipated Benefits to the Field, Outline of Activities and Timeline, and Budget Summary with a maximum of \$6,000. While proposals may be related to projects funded from other sources, these Field Experience projects should be for discrete activities that can be carried out solely with the funds provided and do not require ethics review. The following budget items are not considered appropriate for the nature of these projects: funding for course release, Faculty stipends, payment in lieu of course release, or attending conferences to present the results of the project. Budget headings should include the following: Personnel Costs (substitute teacher costs, secretarial, graduate students, technical), equipment, supplies and materials, mileage, per diem. All other items may be included under "other." A rationale for each of these items should be provided. Applicants should use the University of Alberta rates in their budget submission and school district rates related to substitute teacher costs.

### **Specific Criteria:**

Criteria to be met before proposal can be considered by adjudication committee:

- initiative involves an Education tenure-track faculty member
- project involves schools who are participating in our field experiences
- budget is within the \$6000 limit
- the proposal has the signature of the Department Chair

Criteria for evaluation of proposal:

- the project provides opportunity for two-way sharing of expertise and information between faculty and schools involved in our Faculty field experiences work.
- proposal includes all information requested in the call for submissions
- proposal includes names of potential schools involved in our field experiences work that have expressed an interest in the project
- the total amount spent on all proposals does not exceed the overall budget amount

### **Submission Requirements:**

Please ensure that project proposals include:

1. Specific statements of “purpose” and “objectives” that describe how the faculty member will provide an opportunity for two-way sharing of expertise and information between faculty and schools involved in our Faculty’s field experiences work. For example, what specific knowledge, expertise, pedagogical concerns, and/or curriculum interests would the project be based upon?
2. An outline of activities that clearly relate to the statements of purpose and objectives and show what you will do to serve the intent to “provide an opportunity for two-way sharing of expertise and information between faculty and schools involved in our Faculty’s field experiences work.” For example, what activities or approaches will you select (seminar, discussion groups, workshop, focus group, demonstrations, school visits, etc)? Please include the amount of direct involvement by the faculty member initiating the proposal and names of potential schools interested in this project.
3. A budget summary that flows directly from the purpose, objectives and activities and specifies in sufficient detail what expenditures are meant to cover. For example if a graduate student is being paid what will that person be doing?
4. The proposal is signed by the Department Chair.

**Questions:** can be directed to Department Chairs, or Rob McPhee, Assistant Dean, Field Experiences

**Submit 2-page proposals to:** Lynda Vivier, Undergraduate Students Services, 1-107 Education North, Faculty of Education

**Upcoming Deadline for applications: March 27, 2009**

**Notification of award by: May 1, 2009**





# Chapter 11

## *What is the Role of Field Experiences in the Continuing Professional Development of University Faculty?*

MARK HIRSCHKORN and PAULA KRISTMANSON

*In the fall of 2008, the Faculty of Education at the University of New Brunswick implemented its 'new' Bachelor of Education program. The program is 11 months in duration and draws heavily upon an embedded practicum that operates concurrently with the on-campus components. This article focuses on how the field services component of the teacher education program can serve as an ongoing professional development vehicle for education faculty. It includes a discussion of the assumptions that underpin this intent, specific examples from the University of New Brunswick which promote this potential, as well as examples of how this is being done at other institutions.*

In August 2008 the University of New Brunswick (UNB) began its new 1-year, 'embedded' education program after 2 years of extensive collaboration and planning with the New Brunswick educational community. There were many discussions and compromises between the New Brunswick educational community and the university faculty required to get to the inauguration of the new program, but it was a testimony to the willingness and shared vision of all concerned that a coherent vision was forged (see Hirschhorn, Sears & Rich, 2009 for a detailing of the process and for the details of the program that resulted). One of the features of this new program, an embedded practicum that continues throughout the 11-month experience, is the focus of this article. The following discussion is contextualized within the framework of two assumptions: 1) that connecting field and faculty is necessary for quality teacher education programs and 2) that working with the field can be a source of professional growth for faculty members. With these two assumptions in place, we will first give a brief overview of the program context, followed by a description of the possible transformative nature of direct faculty involvement in schools.

### **Describing the Context**

It was an explicit goal of the new program to increase the 'presence' of classroom pragmatics and personnel in the university components of the education program and, just as importantly, improve the presence of university components and faculty in the schools – the basis for calling the program an 'embedded program'. This was done in the following ways.

1. The practica begins with the start of the K-12 school year and runs concurrently with the on-campus components for the whole year. Thus, the practica and on-campus components begin in August with the return of the teachers (prior to the students), and finish in July. The intent is to expose the interns to an entire year of teaching and to allow them to connect on- and off-campus learning experiences.
2. The on-campus component of their programs consists of three year-long core courses whose focus and topics were negotiated with representatives from the educational community. The intention was to increase relevance of these courses and to align the various topics with moments in the school year. For example, classroom management and classroom set-up topics are the first topics covered, assessment topics align with report card and final exam periods, and so forth.
3. The year long-practica allows students an opportunity to try out ideas and techniques to which they are exposed at university, and return to the university to unpack their experiences with their peers. Similarly, for on-campus assignments they were encouraged to choose an issue or topic that would be meaningful for them in their particular context.
4. The university is represented in each school by two people. First, a 'liaison' teacher, selected by the school from the staff, acts as a daily in-school presence and coordinates the experiences of the interns. Second, faculty representatives, either faculty members or retired administrators, act as direct intermediaries between the school and the university and serve in both assessment and advocacy roles for the interns. Faculty representatives may also offer the resources and expertise of the university in instances related to school-based interests and initiatives.
5. Lastly, there are regular meetings throughout the year between the field services office, the school liaisons and the faculty representatives. These meetings serve a number of administrative functions as program expectations and issues are discussed. Just as importantly, it serves as a collaborative tool as professors, administrators and classroom teachers work as equals toward the goals of the program.

Contrary to the integrated and collaborative emphasis of the program components detailed above, the program confronts many issues that make the integrated vision difficult for the students, the school and the university personnel working in the new program. Judging from the preponderance of "gap literature" that exists, finding ways to have universities and schools work together effectively is a significant challenge at any institution. For example, Kincheloe (2004) attributes this gap to the different cultures of schools and universities – cultures he refers to as "craft" and "research". Ginsburg and Gorostiaga (2001) concur, but have labeled these cultures as "Theorist/Researcher" and "Policy Maker/Practitioner". In the Faculty of Education at UNB, some examples of this cultural divide have also been experienced. For example, factors such as the idiosyncratic nature of schools, resulting in multi-realities for interns, and the variety of beliefs that exist with respect to the value of the on-campus (or off-campus) component of teacher education can have significant impact on a consistent and coherent integrated program.

Although we acknowledge and are aware of these potential obstacles, in this paper we would like to focus on a specific Scholarship of Teaching issue (Boyer, 1997) as it relates to an embedded program such as the one we have put in place. How do you improve an Education faculty's awareness of the educational community, and further, how can working within the educational community contribute to the professional development of that Education faculty? The following discussion presents experiences and literature that speak to the potential of embedded practica from the perspective of the faculty member involved. Although fraught with controversy, this discussion is intended to re-imagine the impact that authentic involvement in the field may have on a faculty member's own professional growth.

### Re-Defining Roles

Most teacher education programs place professional development emphasis on the student intern during the field-based experience. But, what about the faculty members and the mentor teachers who participate in the process? Is there potential for professional growth as a result of being intensely involved in the practicum process? Some faculties of Education, including our own, have difficulty "recruiting" faculty members and mentor teachers because of their apprehension about the quality of interns and the assumed labor-intensive process associated with their mentorship and supervision. If we reframed the practicum experience as a way for all three parties to add to their knowledge of the profession, could we perhaps attract more people to contribute to this process? Is it possible that there are professional development opportunities for faculty members through their participation in the internship process?

Internship roles have traditionally been defined as learner (intern), teacher (mentor or cooperating teacher in the classroom), and supervisor (Faculty representative or Faculty associate). These roles placed the intern as the primary learner in the process, with the mentor and the faculty representative acting as guides and evaluators. In the last 10-15 years, the literature in teacher education has reexamined these roles in the context of widespread educational reform (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1994, 2000, 2006; Koerner, Rust, & Baumgartner, 2002). In particular, Darling-Hammond advocates for "Professional Development Schools" (PDS) which are characterized in part by a redefinition of "teaching and learning for all members of the profession and the school community" (1994, p. 1). Dana and Silva (2000) point to the fact that very little literature exists which examines the role of the supervisor in this PDS model. For example, Hoffman, Rosenbluth, and McCrory (1997) recommend supervisors increase their time in schools, increase their expectations of intern performance, and increase the quality of the feedback they give interns, but do not mention what value the process may have for the supervisor. In what follows, we will present the argument that the practicum can contribute significantly to a Faculty member's professional development by forging connections with the field, keeping current with curriculum and instruction at the school-based level, and developing of a sense of awareness of the realities of today's classrooms.

### **Collaborative Possibilities**

Although the new initiatives at UNB do not embody all physical aspects of Darling-Hammond's PDS, many of the philosophies embedded in the PDS approaches have been adopted in this new program. With respect to linkages with schools and teachers, the new education program at UNB facilitates interaction between the university and the field by creating a partnership between a liaison teacher at the school and the Faculty representative. If appropriately valued and nurtured, this seemingly logistical collaboration can be a source of rich professional discussions. These conversations sometimes stem from the need for problem-solving, the desire to find out more about a particular initiative in the school, or simply a way to share perspectives on curriculum or resources. Certainly there is a potential for such collaborations to be less than fruitful if personality conflicts arise, or if one of the players feels undervalued, but the possibility for positive collaborations is definitely available to faculty members who wish to enter into a sincere dialogue with colleagues in the field. In some cases, the collaborative pairings can be a source of inspiration for ways to help interns overcome obstacles and attain professional goals. They can also be the venue for discussions that bring together complementary areas of expertise areas to their mutual benefit.

### **Meaningful Involvement**

Singh and Stoloff (2006) in their article about teacher candidates' experiences in their practical internships, state that one of the components of an effective practicum is the meaningful involvement of a representative from the university or college in question. What does this "meaningful involvement" entail? It is easy to understand that some university faculty may feel that a traditional 'supervisory and assessment' role does not give any positive washback in terms of a faculty member's own profession growth. Rather, the traditional approach involving observation, feedback, and evaluation is intended to contribute solely to the profession development of the intern. Seen in this traditional light, this supervisor-supervisee relationship might not appear to be a learning opportunity for the supervisor. In fact, the classroom visit and debriefing meetings may be perceived as a source of stress and anxiety for both parties. Dana and Silva (2000), in their reconceptualization of the student teacher "supervisor", describe this role in a four-phase model. Working in the context of a PDS, these Professional Development Associates (PDAs) (the term employed to describe the renewed vision of the university supervisor) engage in a process that begins with establishing a trust relationship between the parties involved. Before jumping into any kind of traditional supervisory tasks, these PDAs took time to establish real lines of communication. We believe this initial phase is key not only to a successful internship for the student-teacher, but to a mutually beneficial professional development relationship.

### **Relationship Building**

The new program model that has been envisioned and brought to fruition at UNB also encourages relationship building and reflective practice from the outset. The gradual release of

responsibility and gradual increase of expectations is intended to provide scaffolding for success. Through this continual growth process, two phenomena can occur which may be viewed as potentially beneficial to the Faculty representative.

1. A trust relationship is formed thus facilitating more positive and less stressful discussion and debriefing meetings between the intern and the faculty representative.
2. Targets for growth, which are built into the reflection and assessment process, are set from the beginning creating a context for the construction of knowledge for all players.

The first point stresses the need and the importance of intern-faculty relationships that are built on principles of a mutual desire for success and a mutual agreement to take ownership of the process. The interns, for their part, have a responsibility to buy into the reflection and professional growth philosophy and process by honestly and regularly looking at the assessment criteria and by setting targets to achieve certain goals. On the other side, the faculty representative needs to take ownership of the process by orchestrating meaningful debriefing sessions with these goals as the focal point. The faculty themselves may also have specific growth goals they have created which they bring to this discussion as well. This can only happen if there exists some level of trust between the parties involved and if there is a commitment to the process and to the internship. As in the Dana and Silva (2000) context, a change of title, from ‘faculty supervisor’ to ‘faculty representative’ indicates a move towards change in the guiding philosophy behind this role.

### **Knowledge Sharing and Co-Construction**

Through this working relationship, the faculty representative can help guide the intern to discover what he or she needs to know. These professional conversations can then focus on directions to help interns gain this knowledge. Sometimes the faculty representative will be able to help the intern immediately without follow-up research; however, in other cases, the faculty representatives will need to engage in an inquiry process that will help them to better understand an issue or discover more about a particular topic. This knowledge can be constructed through further reading, conversations with colleagues in the faculty, and discussions with teachers in the host school. In some circumstances, the faculty member may bring the cohort of interns together in a Professional Learning Community format in order to share, to discuss, and to address an area of interest that may be common and /or pertinent to all student-teachers at a certain point in their professional growth. These meetings could also include the liaison teacher, a cooperating teacher, or an administrator in the school who holds a particular expertise in this area, thus contributing to the co-construction of knowledge for all participants. For example, prior to a winter job fair, interns at a particular school wanted to know about the kinds of questions one may be asked in an interview and how to make sure they were prepared for the variety of potential scenarios. The faculty representative held an initial discussion about the topic, but later brought in the principal to shed light on this process from his point of view. In addition, the faculty member sought out information from the

Director of Education of the school district for her insights and guidance on the topic, and this advice was shared with the interns. The interns also contributed their perceptions on the topic and brought in suggestions that they had gleaned from conversations with teachers in the host school. This was a meaningful learning experience for all involved and accurately details the process we are considering in this work.

Professional conversations such as the one noted above can only happen when the university representative is open to listening to interns, to taking an active role in facilitating a knowledge-building process, and to engaging in inquiry in order to become better informed about certain issues and topics. For professional development to happen, faculty representatives, like the interns, must embody both learner and teacher personas, shedding the traditional assessor and all-knowing expert role. Johnson, Duvernoy, McGill and Will (1996) wrote a particularly poignant reflective article on a collaborative experience between a school and a teacher education faculty. In this article, the authors stated that “it is the goal of this program to help teachers see that evaluating teaching is not a global evaluation of teachers. Rather we want to help young teachers see that they can learn from what works and what fails in order to improve” (p. 176). The article includes the voices of both faculty members and cooperating teachers, who spoke about the value of real collaboration and the 3-way partnership of “student teacher, cooperating teacher and college supervisor”. They reflected on the overriding philosophy of “teachers as learners” and on the learning community that allows for the partners to shift their roles depending on the context. Finally, one university supervisor remarked directly on this collaborative experience as a source of personal “professional growth” as she learned to share the “teaching of ‘her’ students” and learned to negotiate the role of collaborative partner.

### **Formalized Projects and Professional Development Opportunities**

Being connected with and trusted by a school community can also open up opportunities for the sharing of expertise in a more formalized manner. Faculty representatives may wish to seize an opportunity to work with a school on a particular area of common interest and share a particular expertise with the school. For example, one school’s improvement plan focused on the need to improve student results on provincial writing assessments. The faculty representative, who had background in this area of literacy, offered to share expertise on writers’ workshops and conferencing in order to provide a “give-back” to the school. Working together with interested teachers on a particular focus area can provide faculty representatives an enriching professional experience as well as insight into the host school. Another different sort of project that took place at a rural school saw the faculty representative as a coordinator and advisor of an outdoor pursuits unit plan that was designed and implemented by the intern cohort at this school. This particular initiative was again part of a school’s desire to involve the interns in a meaningful way in a project of importance to the school.

### Similar Initiatives from Other Institutions

Increasing the role of university faculty in field experiences, or perhaps redefining the role, is not unique to UNB. Other Education Faculties at other universities have begun to re-envision how faculty can work with(in) the field and, as a result, the role that the field has in the professional development of these faculty is shifting. Some examples are presented below, but it is worth noting that collectively these examples are not overtly driven by having the field serve as a professional development vehicle for faculty, but rather that the goal is typically theory-practice integration and any benefit for faculty is more of a by-product than an intention.

Russell (2009), with an orientation toward self-study, was a participant in a Teacher-Faculty exchange. After working for years with K-12 science teachers, and developing many trusted relationships, Russell was able to negotiate an agreement whereby he would take over the teaching of the high school science courses for a semester and in return the teacher he was replacing would be seconded to the Education faculty to teach science education methods courses. Russell described the experience as “revitalizing” for both he and the seconded teacher and attributes further value to the experience by quoting Schön (1995, p. 5) “that there is an underlying *sense* to be discovered” in what a practitioner does.

MacDonald (2010), in an attempt to bridge the perceived theory-practice divide, began a qualitative study whereby a Bachelor of Education senior high curriculum and pedagogy course was conducted in a local high school, instead of on the university campus. While in the school, course-related assignments were designed to bring pre- and in-service teachers together, while also providing an immediate feedback mechanism focused on the preservice teachers’ active learning lessons. Findings suggest that preservice teachers valued this feedback (among other features provided by the experience) and may be more likely to engage in student-centered learning in their future teaching. In-service teachers also appear to have been re-invigorated through the experience and spoke of incorporating more of these student-centered activities into their own teaching. An additional benefit was that MacDonald developed many relationships with teachers in the area and gained new appreciation for teaching in the Prince Edward Island K-12 school system.

The Education Faculty at the University of Canberra in Australia is reforming the delivery of teacher education by partnering with local schools.

Called “Teaching Clinics”, the model addresses the long-standing distinction between subject matter (content), learning theory (pedagogy) and professional experience (the practicum) in teacher education. Under the Teaching Clinics model, units of study in specific content areas are delivered and assessed within school classrooms, under the supervision of the Faculty lecturer and in co-operation with school teachers and their students. (Watson, Woolnough, Hay, Hellyet, & Stuckey, 2009, p. 1)

What distinguishes this model from other embedded teaching models (such as the one described at UPEI above) is that the professors teaching the education courses also teach K-12 classes while being observed by their teacher education candidates. In effect, they are modeling what they teach, which is then unpacked with the education students before the students take over the teaching of the classes – a brave example of ‘walking the talk’.

Goodnough (2009) describes establishing school district-university partnerships, entitled *Science Across the Curriculum* (SAC), which engaged over fifty K-12 teachers in action research.

During the project, collaborative school-based teams of teachers identified a research issue or question and investigated how to improve specific facets of their teaching and learning through the implementation of classroom interventions and the ongoing collection and analysis of classroom data related to the interventions.  
(p.1)

The research had long-term impacts on the school teachers' professional identity and practice, but also impacted the identity and school awareness of Goodnough when she returned to her work on-campus.

As can be seen in the examples above, the role of the university professor is being re-conceptualized as faculties of Education strive to bring their teaching and research 'closer' to the educational community. If the feedback from the schools we work with at UNB are any indication, the perception by the schools of the university (and vice versa) is shifting, and perhaps would be better described as 'partners in the education of prospective teachers'. This shift is fragile however, and scholars such as Russell (2009) question the long-term sustainability of these attempts. It will be interesting to follow whether these innovative integration attempts survive after their strongest advocates move on to other pursuits.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Although most literature on teacher-education points to national standards (e.g., National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education – NCATE) that call for the involvement of university faculty in clinical experiences and for collaborative partnerships between universities and schools (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2000; Grisham, Laguardia, & Brink, 2000; Singh & Stoloff, 2006), the professional development benefits for players other than the student interns remains largely unexamined. Though fraught with challenges and potential obstacles, these partnerships remain the cornerstone of teacher education reform. As faculty members concerned about the success of the teacher education candidates and the effectiveness of the program we offer, we need to enter school-based experiences, not underestimating our contributions, but embracing the notion of sincere collaboration and mutual learning and teaching. It is only with this somewhat idealistic philosophy that we can move forward and reconcile the sometimes competing interests of school-based and university-based learning and continue on our own professional development journey. We cannot sell the idea of life-long professional growth and self-reflection to our student-teachers without engaging in these processes ourselves. This does not mean "selling out" to the field, but rather taking an active role in contributing to that field and learning to appreciate what each player has to offer, including our own expertise.

For Faculties of Education to re-imagine their education programs, they also need to re-imagine the traditional roles they once assumed. With accreditation and standards always in the forefront, it may seem even more necessary for the faculty representative to remain as the impartial and top-down style assessor. We would argue that this model no longer suits the growing need for interns to engage in self-reflection and continual professional growth. In



pedagogical circles we often extol the virtues of modeling, this context should be no exception. As representatives of an institution that promotes effective practice, we also need to embrace these philosophies and enter schools with a spirit of collaboration and learning. At times we may be able to contribute our expertise or academic interests in some meaningful manner, but we may also be able to gain valuable insight and perspective from real collaboration.

Darling-Hammond (2000, 2006, and elsewhere) argues strongly for teacher education programs that fully integrate school-based experiences with relevant course work that prepares interns to be problem solvers and higher order thinkers. As members of a faculty of Education, we must not underestimate the potential contributions of our faculty as a whole, nor of our own contributions. Darling-Hammond has continually pointed to studies which point to the need for well-prepared teachers, and stated that “even very intelligent people who are enthusiastic about teaching, cannot easily succeed without preparation” (p. 168). Although she advocates for a tight relationship between schools and teacher preparation institutions, she does not buy into the notion that a program consists of simply on-the-job, trial-and-error training. In the same way that being in schools can be a professionally enriching experience for faculty members, taking part in academic discussions and research can help teachers and interns meet the high expectations of the field and the diverse groups of students that interns will eventually encounter. Schools need teachers to evolve and adapt to new innovations and challenges, schools of education and faculty members therein need to be responsive to these changes in a collective and individualized manner. Reforms to the teacher education program as a whole may be the first step; the second step is personal investment on the part of individual faculty members. This investment and real relationship with the field are keys to a sustainable, authentic and effective teacher training program.

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# Chapter 12

## *Towards the Education of Preservice Teacher Educators Located in Distant Regions*

FRANCE LACOURSE and ENRIQUE CORREA MOLINA

*The question of professionalization of teaching entails the necessary professionalization of those who participate in preservice teacher education. This study focuses on teacher educators in the field: associate teachers and supervisors working in distant regions. Since the implementation of reforms in teacher education in Québec a substantial field experience component is involved and teacher educators' continuing education needs to be analysed. Training sessions are intended for these teacher educators, but what happens to those, who for reasons of geographical distance are not always able to make it to the sessions? This study presents results concerning the perception of the role assumed by these teacher educators, the needs they express, as well as possible solutions in responding to these needs.*

### Introduction

In Quebec, two consecutive reforms impacting on teacher education took place during the 1990s, when teacher education had barely evolved since being taken over by the universities in 1972: one in 1992, formulating 54 competencies to be developed in teacher education programs, and the other in 2001, encapsulating 12 professional competencies with a substantial field experience component. The notion of competency put forth here is defined as the mobilization of diverse resources, in a situated context, with a view to act effectively. This new orientation had us questioning the professionalization of teacher educators of preservice teachers. Generally speaking, these teacher educators are or had been teachers or school principals, but being a teacher or principal is not sufficient preparation for being a teacher educator (Altet, Paquay & Perrenoud, 2002).

Supervising the practicum is a dimension of teacher education that deserves to be documented more fully, for few studies have been devoted to it (Gervais & Desrosiers, 2005; Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1009). Nevertheless, the influence that teacher educators may have on the learning processes of preservice teachers during their practicum has been recognized (Beauchesne, 2000, Gervais & Desrosiers, 2005; Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2008).

To be interested in teacher educators can only contribute towards the quality of preservice teacher education. Indeed, results of empirical studies indicate that the awareness of these teacher educators about their role enables them to provide preservice teachers with more

effective feedback (Gervais & Correa Molina, 2004; Zanting, Verloop & Vermont, 2001). Just like Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998), as professors of teacher education we think that it is important to know if these teacher educators act in coherence with the reform orientations in teacher education programs. To this end, university teacher education programs in Québec organize meetings with teacher educators involved in the practice component of those programs. The aim is to guide them in the understanding of program orientation and program content and to prepare them to better assume the tasks of their role. Moreover, it is a ministerial directive to offer continuing education to teacher educators. But, what understanding do they have of their role and of their continuing education? What are the needs of educators who, for reasons of distance, do not attend the training sessions of the programs? Our research question becomes: If teacher educators do not have sufficient knowledge of the orientations of the program and the models of intelligibility of work situations dealt with during teacher education, how can we assure the progressive integration of the links between theory and practice by taking advantage of activities associated with teacher education?

Aware of the fact that teacher educators working in a distant region are not always able to attend training sessions, our intent is to identify, on the one hand, what exists in the empirical research on distance education of preservice teacher educators and, on the other, to clarify the perception that educators involved in the practicum, exercising their function in distant regions, have of their competencies and training needs. In this article, we first present the context and the problem of the study, as well as the conceptual and methodological framework. The presentation of results, discussion and conclusion will follow.

### **The Training Problem of Educators of Preservice Teachers in Distant Regions**

In Québec, preservice teacher education aims to the professionalization of preservice teachers starting with a curriculum focused on the development of competencies and on the paradigm of the reflective practitioner (Schön, 1987). It is a political choice of decision makers in Québec to enhance the teaching profession in order to promote social recognition and professional status for teachers. At the same time, Québec recognizes the complexity of the trade; it distributes more responsibilities and local power of decision making, which add to the complexity. However, it is a move from the intellectual foundations of teaching to a paradigm of alternation. As Lang (1999) emphasises, interpretative practices are replacing prescriptive ones. Moreover, educational psychology is losing its unique theoretical status outside of real practice for multidisciplinary approaches to teaching practice; in other words it values research action closer to the classroom environment. Nowadays, the teacher education programs in Québec consist of four years of training. Within each year, the practicum alternates with university activities. Each program is anchored in the training of professional competencies prescribed by the Ministry of Education (Ministère de l'Éducation<sup>1</sup>, 2001). The training programs provide a minimum of 700 hours of practicum to progressively develop the set of competencies for real teaching situations.

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<sup>1</sup> Since 2005 the Ministère de l'Éducation is known as the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport).

Professionalization means three states: professionality, professionism and professionalism. Like Schön (1987) indicates, knowledge in action is an incorporation and transformation of formal knowledge during the construction of professional experience. Summarizing Schön, we can say that reflection in action is like inductive and deductive knowledge. In a professional situation where teachers are capable of identifying causes of problems, they can test the solution and regulate their actions. It is an everyday rational delving into theory and practice called professionality. Teachers use a nonlinear process between practice-theory-practice to incorporate multiple types of knowledge. They also foresee continuing education as professional development. Thus, this individual development of knowledge contributes collectively to the community of practice. This process is considered professionism. It expresses the state of specific knowledge in teaching that activists of the profession work on to value socially this educational service to the population, which develops a will for autonomy and more decisional power. First, there is an actualization of knowledge and capacity (individually and collectively) embedded in a process of professional development named *professionality*. Second, the use of strategies and collective rational processes towards a professionalization of the trade is called *professionism*. Third, individual adhesion to the actual rational and collective norms is viewed as professional socialization and named *professionalism* (Bourdoncle, 1991).

Altet (1994) suggests that teacher education tries to build a type of approach to design action-knowledge-problems anchored in practical and scientific knowledge. The progressive building of competencies relies on a theory-practice articulation throughout the year. Diverse artefacts and actions participate in the professional development and significant transformation of identity. We refer to didactic pedagogical courses, disciplinary courses, courses of integration, action-research, portfolio or ePortfolio of professional competencies, a professional essay, practicum and accompaniment. The articulation creates scaffolds for subjective experience in the practicum and for diversity of conditions of exercise as well as knowledge, technological know-how and generic knowledge of the teaching profession.

We assume that training in the context of practice requires the accompaniment and supervision of educators capable of contributing towards the professional development of the preservice teacher. In Québec, these teacher educators are the associate teacher and the practicum supervisor. During the practicum, preservice teachers are expected to build their professionality and professionalism as defined previously, their professional identities, and to integrate theory and practice. In order to do this, teacher educators must sustain the preservice teacher throughout difficulties and failures in the field of practice by offering behaviours likely to guide and to scaffold their professional development. In the following sections, we shall give an overview of the practicum period and of the educators who participate in it.

### ***The Practicum Period***

According to Pelpel (1989), a practicum constitutes a “stay” somewhere other than in the institution of training and implies a length of time and a milieu. A stay is determined by the type of practicum and defines a period of time that the preservice teacher must spend in an institution which welcomes and enables her or him to live everyday teaching in a real classroom.: Such a stay can provoke deep resonance in training principles, and logic of experiences that we shall talk about below.

The practicum, above all, enables contact with the field of experience, the professional situation and the implementation of teaching practices. During the course of the training, the practicum periods include a progression that normally proceeds from making contact with the professional world to taking charge of one or more professional responsibilities (Pepel, 1989). Hence, because of “un entraînement systématique et réfléchi”<sup>2</sup> (Ministère de l’Éducation, 1994, p. 3), the practicum enables the preservice teacher to develop the capacity to activate knowledge acquired during university education.

From Pepel’s (1989) viewpoint, the practicum constitutes a critical phase in the program, consisting of three essential characteristics for a preservice teacher:

- an intermediary zone of experience between the internal world (ideas, acquired theories, representations, etc.) and the external world (work constraints);
- a reality test, for this is the moment where ideal and reality are articulated; the preservice teacher feels confronted, in the field itself, with constraints and requirements of reality without being absolutely submitted to them;
- a defence against anxiety-frustration caused by the duty to abandon old certainties to expose oneself to the reality risks of the external world.

Hence, in the practicum the preservice teacher learns by observing, by doing, by putting into practice the acquisitions of institutional education (Pepel, 1989), and by reflecting upon the practice and its links with theory. The practicum situation, therefore, should assist preservice teachers to regulate their own professional development and to learn how to continue to learn; otherwise this educational device fails in its educational mission (Zeichner, 1996).

Indeed, according to research in teacher education, the lessons of experience that students draw upon during the practicum period are strongly influenced by suppositions, conceptions and beliefs (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998; Zanting, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2001; Zeichner, 1996). Unless these ideas are addressed, they will interfere with preservice teachers’ development during the practicum.

The preconceptions that students bring with them, especially those concerning their experiences as pupils, limit the efficacy of their practical experience, because of a conservative and reproductive character of traditional practices (Chaliès & Durand, 2000). It is therefore important to help preservice teachers clarify their personal theories and assist them in assuming themselves as researchers of their practice. Guiding preservice teachers so that they will be able to explain their personal theories and practices, criticizing them and re-examining them in the light of different points of view, will help them become selective and critical in the use of knowledge and theories produced externally (Zanting, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2001; Zeichner, 1996).

These observations only emphasize the importance and the relevance to count on teacher educators in the field. They may help preservice teachers break with their preconceptions of teaching and stimulate their sense of analysis of practice. This type of accompaniment should bring them to assume responsibility for their own professional development.

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<sup>2</sup> “a systematic and reflective training” (our translation).

### ***Educators in the Field***

In Québec, the university supervisor and the associate teacher assume a role as teacher educators. Moreover, the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, (2008) recognizes this role by considering that associate teachers play an important role in the education of the changing of the guard. A competent teacher educator must be able to consciously discern what a preservice teacher may need to meet the requirements for the practicum teaching. During the practicum, teacher educators in practical training supervise the preservice teachers, and counsel and assist them in transferring theoretical acquisitions towards practice. They help analyze experiences that the preservice teachers are living, help them build knowledge emanating from practice, and guide them towards reflective practice (Altet, Paquay, & Perrenoud, 2002). To achieve this, as professionals, these educators manifest and mobilize resources in their work with the preservice teachers.

Being a teacher educator in the field does not therefore constitute a tall order. A series of competencies is necessary for those who take on this role in practice teaching. If all teacher educators want preservice teachers to begin to control their own teaching, we must help them look beyond the surface of their own educational practice as well as the practice of others. It is at this level that the presence of educators in the field takes on its importance.

#### The Supervisor

We stated that, for the preservice teacher, the practicum constitutes, among other things, an occasion for confronting the reality of the teaching task, an occasion to link theory with practice and a period of analysis and improvement of one's practice. Above all, these last two occasions could not be assumed by the preservice teacher without the presence of a supervisor who, because of her or his expertise, role and knowledge of program content, is likely to offer the preservice teacher assistance in the transformation of identity and professional development.

According to Enz, Freeman and Wallin (1996), three roles are assumed by the supervisor of the practicum: accompanist, mediator and resource person. Other than these roles, the supervisor possesses the status of institutional evaluator. According to Gervais and Desrosiers (2005), the supervisor's role of accompanist is similar to that of the associate teacher's, although less contextualized, for a visit or visits to observe or advice the preservice teacher are limited to one or two visits. As a mediator, the supervisor becomes a pedagogical link between associate teacher, preservice teacher, school and university. She or he tries to establish good communicational relations and supports the preservice teacher in establishing links between learning at university and in the school context. As a resource person, the supervisor makes herself or himself available to the associate teacher for support in the role of co-educator, in the function of co-evaluator, and to provide information that the associate teacher may require.

Although it is generally recognized that the associate teacher has a strong influence on the performance of the preservice teacher, it is important to point out that without the presence of the supervisor, the experiences of the preservice teacher would not be consistent enough. As a representative of the institution of training, she or he assumes the roles of an evaluator, specific to her or him (Henry & Beasley, 1989). Indeed, through the role of mediator, the supervisor is involved in the definition and communication of learning

accomplished by the preservice teacher as well as institutional expectations with regard to evaluation for certification purposes. In addition, it would appear that preservice teachers need the support of someone from the university and that they even seek it out (Beauchesne, 2000; Gervais, 1997), mostly when the context of the practicum happens to be difficult.

To make the difference clearer, we shall describe the professional triad. As co-educator-evaluator, the supervisor must guide the preservice teacher to go beyond the superficial analysis of teaching. She or he must bring the preservice teacher to think about what is happening, to see relations that must be established, to formulate action plans for upcoming experiences, to assist her or him in the evolution of practice, and to support the development of competencies required to act effectively as a preservice teacher (Henry & Beasley, 1989; Mante, 1998), and to contribute towards the academic success of pupils. Consequently, it is necessary that the supervisor acknowledges this role and is recognized as a university teacher educator, and has the resources and competencies specific to the function of supervisor. Among these resources, sensitivity is an important feature to make supervision meetings educational moments (Correa Molina, 2005; Lopez-Real, Stimpson & Bunton, 2001).

### The Associate Teacher

In Quebec, the associate teacher is a teacher educator who possesses expertise in the field, knowledge of the professional act, and accompanies the preservice teacher in the development of competencies and in her or his professional development. The associate teacher also contributes towards the evaluation of the preservice teacher in collaboration with the supervisor. Six characteristics are sought in the associate teacher (Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2008):

- 1) volunteering (the voluntary character of the function),
- 2) significant experience in teaching (being qualified and having taught for at least five years),
- 3) mastery of professional competencies (competencies recognized by the teaching environment),
- 4) appropriate training in the role of associate teacher (financial allowance attributed by the Ministry to school boards to assure the university education of teachers),
- 5) the capacity of reflective analysis and openness to change (to guarantee relevant feedback and adaptations),
- 6) the capacity to collaborate (to foster team spirit, development of a community of practice, a unified vision of the profession).

According to the literature, the accompaniment assumed by an associate teacher translates into several roles and functions. As for the roles, among other things, the associate teacher acts as an observer of the preservice teacher's performance, as counsellor, model teacher, and evaluator (Chaliès & Durand, 2000). As for the functions, the associate teacher must welcome and integrate the preservice teacher into the life of the school, validate the preservice teacher's project and her or his learning, transmit technological know-how, put her or his practice into words, supervise the tasks assumed by the preservice teacher and arouse reflection on action.



The associate teacher must be sufficiently aware of the fact that she or he must not act in front of the preservice teacher as the teacher that she or he is, but as a teacher educator, capable of assuming two complementary, but very different identities. The associate teacher must, in this way, mobilize the resources specific to the roles and functions attributed to her or him in order to scaffold the preservice professional development and to manifest competency as co-educator and co-evaluator of teachers.

### **Approaches during Accompaniment**

A model of accompaniment identified by Glickman (in Pajak, 1993) considers three approaches of supervision: directive, collaborative, and non-directive. The directive approach is centered on control or on information. The teacher educator recommends ways of doing things, without necessarily justifying them, gives clues or suggestions so that the preservice teacher may choose alternatives or adapt them according to her or his needs.

The collaborative approach leaves the preservice teacher with sufficient room for discussion concerning aspects linked to teaching. The preservice teacher feels comfortable to conceive of projects, to use diverse pedagogical approaches, consult and be in agreement concerning her or his professional act with the associate teacher. Concerted team work is the main characteristic of this approach.

The non-directive approach allows the preservice teacher to make her or his own decisions and to live her or his own experiences. This does not mean that it is a “laisser-faire” approach. It allows the preservice teacher to experiment in order to reflect afterwards with the associate teacher.

### ***Our Question***

The professional learning is addressed in teacher education programs as an object of knowledge and not simply as an exposure of learners to the technological know-how of the environment. So, *if preservice teacher educators do not have sufficient knowledge of the orientations of the program and the models of intelligibility of work situations dealt with during teacher training, how can we assure the progressive integration of the links between theory and practice by taking advantage of activities associated with teacher education?* The need for quality accompaniment of preservice teachers located at a distance and registered in different programs at the Faculty of Education at l'Université de Sherbrooke has been identified for a number of years. Consequently, we assume it is essential to offer a program to accompany associate teachers and supervisors located at a distance who are unable to attend university for meetings and training sessions. Such a program will lead to a better understanding of the orientations and tools of accompaniment. It will guide harmonization of the interventions by all teacher educators in a given program and a dynamic community of practice at the level of collective engagement.

Hence, conscious of the fact that educators in the field working in a distant region are not always able to participate in training sessions organized by the university, we believe it necessary to look for a way to respond to their needs. In order to do this, we want to find out, on the one hand, how these teacher educators perceive their role of accompaniment and, on

the other, what type of support they should be offered, considering their perception of their role. ?

### Methodological Process

An extensive review of the empirical literature pertaining to educators in the field was completed before the questionnaire was constructed. This review was done starting with online data bases: Eric, Francis, Proquest, and the *INRP*. Computerized library catalogues, the one at the University of Sherbrooke in particular, were consulted. Articles retained were those of the last ten years. Concomitantly, a survey was conducted on nine francophone university Web site in Quebec. This survey sought to verify the type of information they displayed on the dimension of practice in teacher education, more specifically, the one related to educators in the field: the associate teacher and the practicum supervisor.

During a second phase, educators in the field of two teacher education programs were contacted: in special education (BAS) and secondary school teaching (BES BEALS). Five associate teachers in each program and three supervisors responded to the first version of a questionnaire in order to validate it. Following the analysis of data from this questionnaire, modifications were made before sending it to a larger population of associate teachers and supervisors working in a distant region in three different programs, namely the two programs previously mentioned, and the vocational training program (BEP). The number of respondents from the first two programs (BASS, BES BEALS) is shown in Table 1. In this paper the results from the BEP program will not be presented.

Program	Associate teachers(AT)			Supervisors(S)			Total	
	Solicitation	Respon- dents	%	Solicitation	Respondents	%	Respon- dents AT+S	%
Special education (BASS)	250	102	41 %	7	7	100%	109	44 %
Secondary school teaching (BES BEALS)	30	16	53 %	No solicitation (all supervisors are coming to the university)	0	0%	16	53 %

Table 1: Respondents of BASS and BES BEALS programs in the study

Table 1 shows enough respondents to allow drawing of some conclusions. As the third horizontal line shows under the heading “supervisor(s)” for the BES BEALS programs, all the supervisors came to the university training and meetings. Therefore, no supervisors from these programs were asked to respond to the questionnaire. Only the seven supervisors from the

BASS program answered the questionnaire. The BASS supervisors responded to a computerized questionnaire. The associate teachers responded to a questionnaire in paper format. This manner of proceeding with the associate teachers was due to the accessibility of a postal address rather than an electronic one. This is not the case for the supervisors, who, because of their contractual relations with the university, must all have an institutional email address.

### ***Some Results from the Literature Review and Information on University Web Sites***

The literature reviewed indicates that many authors are interested in diverse aspects of teacher educators in the field: for example, their functions, identity, professionalism, and also their educational background. The research literature also touches upon distance education or e-learning in the context of personal training. However, we have not found studies pertaining to the question of distance education of teacher educators in the field working in distant regions. This review therefore reveals a lack of specific means to further the education of teacher educators for exercising their functions in geographical regions too far away to attend training sessions pertaining to their roles and functions. In addition, in the survey conducted on the Web sites of several Québec universities, we found valuable information on aspects concerning the education in field experiences. Among other things, we found, for example, names of people responsible for the practicum, information on the nature, duration and type of practicum, roles of teacher educators and information linked to their education. This information varies, depending on the university site consulted. An essential observation with regard to our objective is that none of the university Web sites consulted mention how they deal with the continuing education of teacher educators working in distant regions, or with teacher educators in general. This is where this study finds all its relevance.

We wish to recall here that the objective of our study is to discover the perception that teacher educators working in distant regions have of their role so that we can offer them adequate support given their situation. We are therefore presenting the results obtained from the analysis of our data. To achieve this, we shall first present a portrait of the associate teachers, followed by the one pertaining to the practicum supervisors. A proposal of ways to support them will close this section.

### ***Perceptions of Associate Teachers and Supervisors***

The questionnaire sent to the respondents (associate teachers and supervisors) presented 13 questions about their view on different topics of accompaniment. For both types of respondents questions were adapted in order to focus on the role of the respondent, but the meaning of each question remained the same. Two questions concerned the documentation provided by the university; two were about the definition of accompaniment and the feeling of competency in the role of teacher educator of preservice teachers; four questions examined the needs of educators; three questions covered the access to a Web site on which information about teacher education could be found, what kind of information should be provided, the willingness to participate in a discussion forum, and who should access the site. One question was about the style of accompaniment of the educators and the last one asked for additional

comments. In this paper the results will come from only some of the questions: those about roles, needs and the support that should be offered on the Web site.

### Associate Teachers and Their Perception of Their Role

One question asked associate teachers how they see themselves in their role. The associate teachers, generally speaking, see themselves as “*accompagnateur*” for the preservice teacher, because they lend their classrooms to preservice teachers and share experiences with them. They offer feedback to validate pedagogical and professional processes; they introduce her or him to the school staff, thus contribute towards their socialization and therefore grant her or him more autonomy. According to their remarks, accompanying a preservice teacher means:

- guiding her or him in the practice of future functions
- acting as a model, guiding her or him, to work in a team...allowing space, while keeping an eye on class preparation; being a critical thinker when necessary, assessing in a formative manner, fostering her or his involvement in the work team.

Also, concerning their profile of accompaniment, according to the classification of Glickman (in Pajak, 1993), teachers qualify their style of accompaniment as being more collaborative, which coincides with the remarks presented in the previous paragraph, namely that they allow the preservice teacher space, and work as a team with her or him. Moreover, the preservice teacher is invited to make decisions and to make her or his own experiences. Some of them indicate, however, that their profile changes little by little during the practicum. Their accompaniment moves on a continuum of styles. This means that they are more directive at the beginning of the practicum, collaborative during the practicum, and are non-directive towards the end of the practicum.

### Associate Teachers and Their Needs

Other questions concerned the needs of the associated teacher. Do they have needs? What are they? Can they explain them? Do they feel the need to share their experience with colleagues? A majority of associate teachers, 95/118 (81 %), express needs. Only 23/118 (19 %) of them do not provide an answer to this question. Of the teachers having expressed needs, most of them indicate that they would like to have the possibility of sharing with other colleagues. Also, they express the desire for having access to documents linked to the academic education of the preservice teachers that they welcome into their classrooms. Other needs expressed are relative to practicum organization, university itinerary, content of didactic courses, etc. Here are some examples:

- to share on a discussion forum with other colleagues, who are going through the same experience at the same time;
- to receive academic documents from the university;
- to make sure associate teachers go for up-to-date training sessions;

- to access the email of staff at the university;
- to have less workload to be able to work better with the preservice teacher.

As for the question whether they sometimes feel the need to share their experience with other teacher educators, the majority answered “yes” (58/118; 49 %) and states that they regularly discuss with their colleagues in their school that welcomes preservice teachers. However, a similar number of respondents, 52/118 (44 %), answered that they do not feel the need to share with other teacher educators, for lack of time and the feeling of having been well trained to assume this task. What does it mean having been well trained? Is it through their own studies in a teacher education program? Is it through continuing education? This has to be determined. Furthermore, from our viewpoint the perception of need is therefore divided, and according to the point of view of half of the respondents, those needs are met by others in the practicum environment.

### The Practicum Supervisors and Their Needs

The seven supervisors who answered our questionnaire are all from the Bachelor in Education and Special and Social Education program (BASS), as you can see in Table 1. They stated two types of needs:

- to enable exchanges with other supervisors during annual meetings organized by the teacher education programs, and
- to make training sessions for practicum supervisors available and mandatory.

They indicate the themes they would like to see treated during these sessions; namely, accompaniment and assessment of competencies, conflict management and interpersonal relations.

As for the fact of feeling a need to share their experience as teacher educators with other educators of preservice teachers, six of them stated that they feel such a need. As for the ways to satisfy this need, they try to attend meetings organized by the program they are attached to at least once a year. In spite of the great distance for some of them, they come to the meetings, for, on the one hand, they find them reassuring, and on the other, they later can share the meeting exchanges with the associate teachers they work with during the supervision of preservice teachers.

With regard to their profile of intervention with preservice teachers, five of them identify having more of a collaborative style, whereas one of them is more directive, and the other shares the directive and collaborative styles. We can draw the conclusion that the style favoured by supervisors is congruent with that favoured by the associate teachers.

### Paths of Support Explored

One of the paths explored by our team to offer support to teacher educators working in distant regions is the creation of a Web site that offers a discussion forum. This idea was presented to the respondents, who took part in the questionnaire. A majority of associate teachers agreed with the idea. Associate teachers expected that on the Web site they would be

able to access concrete examples of objectives pursued by the practicum: general information, paths of reflection on assessment, information on the teacher education program, examples of solutions to problems met by some preservice teachers and associate teachers, etc.

As for the supervisors, five of them are in total agreement with the idea of a Web site and a discussion forum. However, two of them did not express any interest, for they prefer direct or personal contact with individuals, and do not have time to try to understand how the forum or the site functions – an indicator of the intergenerational hiatus with regard to the use of ICT. Concerning the content of the site, the supervisors would like to access relevant documentation, names of supervisors with more experience and more likely to help them, case studies or simulations, data on course content, activities and projects in which the preservice teachers participated.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the discussion of our findings, we offer the following observations. While a significant percentage of associate teachers express a need for sharing in order to exchange ideas with other teacher educators to find an answer to their concerns or to discuss other forms of accompaniment, a considerable percentage expresses no need to share with other teacher educators. This supports the idea that the more training an associate teacher gets, the more she or he feels the need for training and vice versa.

We can also observe that a concern of supervisors is linked to the question of interpersonal relations. We can interpret this as the desire of the teacher educator, who wants to get her or his message across, to create a favourable climate for the exchange of ideas with the preservice teacher, in order to make those moments educational moments. This aspect has also been documented in a previous study that underlines sensitivity towards the emotions of learners as one of the qualities required of those who exercise the role of an educator, more specifically, the role of a practicum supervisor (Correa Molina, 2005).

The associate teachers as well as the supervisors who participated in this study view sharing with other educators as a formative moment. Indeed, according to some authors (Altet, Paquay & Perrenoud, 2002; Gervais & Correa Molina, 2004) an exchange between educators, when structured, can lead to the analysis of practice between peers. This, according to Pospel (2002), is what constitutes in itself an educational moment. The sharing that we are talking about here is of an *asynchronous* virtual kind that, in our opinion, has to be documented. The next step, therefore, would consist in implementing this type of exchange to validate its relevance and usefulness for teacher educators exercising their function in distant regions. This situation of continuing education forces the analysis of the pedagogical design to be fostered on the technological plan for the purpose of contributing towards a transformation of identity, professional development, and personal growth of teacher educators in distant regions.

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# Chapter 13

## *Field Experiences at the University of Saskatchewan: A Current State of Affairs*

LYNN LEMISKO and ANGELA WARD

*In this paper the authors describe how their involvement in undergraduate program renewal has led them to understand the key role of field experiences in transforming the relationship between universities and school systems. The authors explore assumptions about authentic partnerships, governance frameworks, competency-based learning, and ways to respond to diversity and pluralism within an undergraduate teacher education program. Field experiences are often fully conceptualized after program change has taken place; in this instance, creative projects were designed in collaboration with school divisions to demonstrate how field experiences could embody program ideals. Despite challenges, we have begun to create a culture of authentic partnership through intensive work with teachers and administrators in our local school systems. While we have received positive feedback from many in the field about these changes, it is still a struggle to persuade many university faculty of their role in supporting pre-service teachers' classroom experiences. We believe that field experiences are a potential site of praxis, where efforts to develop a teacher education program based on ideals of social justice and transformation can be realized.*

### **Current Issues and Tensions in Field Experiences in Canadian Contexts**

The relationship between field experiences and coursework in pre-service teacher education programs has become more problematic in Canada as the idea of simple “apprenticeship” into the teaching profession has given way to more complex understandings of the role and identity of teachers. The assumption no longer holds that teacher candidates absorb theoretical knowledge from their university coursework (including methodology and content courses) and then magically transform this knowledge into practice.

Currently, in the education literature, teacher knowledge is conceptualized as “knowledge of practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) that encompasses prior theoretical understanding and the craft of teaching, so that teachers are able to actively create their own knowledge and practice of teaching through reflection and metacognitive awareness. In this view of teacher knowledge as constructed within a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), field experiences become a site of new learning generated by the interning teacher together with mentor teachers and university supervisors. However, many teachers currently in the field have been educated with the idea of a technical-rational apprenticeship into specific management skills and teaching practices. There is evidence that successful teacher education

programs (Darling-Hammond, 2006) such as those in Finland, focus on developing problem-solving orientations in teacher candidates, who are required to carry out research on practice as part of their master's level degree in pedagogy.

These diverse perspectives on the role of field experiences exacerbate existing tensions between faculties of education and school systems. As we engage in undergraduate education program renewal at the University of Saskatchewan, we encounter challenges in the following areas, which will be discussed in the paper:

- **Authentic partnerships:** These are crucial if we are to rethink the role of mentor teachers and to engage schools more deeply in our undergraduate program.
- **Governance frameworks:** We need to engage in thoughtful discussion with the Ministry of Education, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, divisional and school-based administrators, as well as teachers, teacher candidates and faculty members about how we develop content and goals for field experiences, and how we define "success" for teacher candidates.
- **Competency-based learning in teacher education:** Saskatchewan is moving late into the national debate about competencies for beginning teachers. At the College of Education we have established goals, but have to develop these into required, measured competencies.
- **Responding to diversity and pluralism:** Despite a reputation as leaders in the area of Aboriginal education, we are at the beginning of infusing First Nations, Métis and Inuit knowledges, perspectives and ways of knowing into our field experiences.

### **The Current Program at the University of Saskatchewan: Context and Initial Evolutions**

The College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan prepares educators who primarily work in Saskatchewan and western Canada. Based on a program that was implemented in the 1990s, the College offers a number of routes to earn a Bachelor of Education. These routes share core courses and have similar field experience requirements, but have evolved in response to various educative and political initiatives over the years. The majority of teacher candidates are enrolled in the sequential elementary and secondary program route; they complete at least two years of disciplinary study in arts and sciences, or a full degree, before entering the College of Education for two years of professional study. The Practical and Applied Arts route (PAA), along with the Indian Teacher Education (ITEP), the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education (SUNTEP) and the music education program routes admit teacher candidates directly from high school and candidates engage in disciplinary and professional study concurrently.

The field experiences of the program were very traditional. Teacher candidates in the sequential program spent two weeks out in schools in the second term of their first year of professional study, and were evaluated by their co-operating teachers who used multiple checklists to record observations of teaching. The internship was (and still is) a full term of

teaching in the school. Interns typically spent the whole term with one teacher, and again the evaluation was very much modeled on 1970s task analysis approaches, looking for technical skills and details of classroom management. The larger issues of infusion of Aboriginal knowledge and ways of knowing, social justice and anti-racism, were hardly mentioned in internship materials. There was little autonomy for interns, and a view of the visiting college supervisors as experts.

However, enhancements to this program were deemed necessary based on feedback received from a Systematic Program Review (SPR). While we learned that our programs were considered effective in preparing beginning educators (we received a “B” rating in our SPR), we were advised that there was urgent need to provide all teacher candidates with more opportunities to connect coursework and field experiences, and a need for practical, in-classroom examples of cross-cultural and Aboriginal education in action. Based on this advice, we entered into program renewal discussions which enabled us as a faculty to identify six major goals that will frame the proposed new undergraduate program. Our goals read:

We strive to prepare teachers who

- engage in education as transformational praxis
- philosophize educational possibilities
- recognize learning as valuing and as a constructive process
- build communities
- affirm dignity and respect for individuals
- support emancipatory action for social and ecological justice .

At the same time as program renewal discussions unfolded, the College negotiated formal partnerships with three local school divisions that included agreements to second teachers from schools to the university and arrangements to engage with schools in designing pilot projects to investigate alternative approaches to field experiences. Working with one or two cohorts of teacher candidates, seconded teachers helped build teams of faculty across departments and discipline areas, and arranged more intensive school experiences for those teacher candidates fortunate enough to be in the pilot cohorts.

Collaborative work with seconded teachers assisted in development of our *Professional Growth Guide* (PGG), a complete revision of our practicum assessment materials (see at <http://www.usask.ca/education/program/fieldexperiences/index.php/>). The PGG takes the six program goals indicated above and uses these as a framework for recording learning from field experiences. Teacher candidates were to have the primary responsibility for recording data in this electronic document and they were to include comments from co-operating teachers and faculty. In program renewal discussions and revisions of practicum materials it became clear that we are now, in general, working from a set of ideas quite different from those underpinning the “traditional” type of practicum we had been offering.

Development of our renewed field experiences and PGG are based on assumptions arising from ideas about reflective practice (Schön, 1983). While reflection “after action” proved very unpopular with teacher candidates enrolled in our program, reflection “in action”, or tightly connected with action, has been met with much approval (see term-by-term surveys). Research into the importance of connecting practice and theory through personal experience (Korthagen, 2001) and through inquiry and reflection (Schulte, 2003) indicate there is a much

higher rate of satisfaction and learning among teacher candidates when they alternate between engaging in field experiences and meeting with faculty for on-campus study. Data gathered during pilot projects we conducted – see the Kappa pilot project report, for example – support this research, demonstrating that inquiry and reflection-in-action provide very powerful learning opportunities. Based on this kind of positive evidence, we moved forward in the program renewal process with complete awareness of the challenges we would continue to encounter in the effort to enhance praxis.

### **Authentic Partnerships**

Underpinning our capacity to offer the kind of experiences we desire in our renewed program is the idea and reality of forming “authentic partnerships” with local school divisions. Our notion of authentic partnerships goes beyond the understanding of partnerships as a simple business contract. Instead, we think of authentic partnerships as dynamic, flexible and negotiated relationships among members who work together to “promote a shared sense of mission and vision and [who] support collective ownership and accountability” (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 2). Based on this idea, we do not enter partnership arrangements with school divisions with the understanding that they simply provide locations where teacher candidates in our program go for field experiences. Instead, we operate on the notion that everyone involved in the authentic partnership should “get something” out of the collaboration and should paint, together, “a picture of a future that partners want to accomplish together” (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 2).

Building a shared mission and vision is complex and takes time and each partnership must be treated as a unique relationship shaped by particular cultures, goals and commitments of the member organizations. This means that authentic partnerships are more like a verb - an ongoing, unfolding process - rather than a noun - a fixed “business” contract. While living with this kind of complexity can be somewhat unnerving, we believe this kind of “authentic partnership” is necessary to achieve our goal of developing field experiences that are mutually transformative. These ideas are echoed in the mission statement of Prairie Spirit School Division (2005-08) which reads, in part:

We are committed to pursuing:

1. Genuine partnerships among and between educators, parents, students, communities and human service providers as needed to support all our students in achieving the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for success in school and in life.
2. Partnerships that are mutually supportive of each other and build on each others’ strength and interests.
3. Relationships that are built on genuine understandings and shared knowledge demonstrating mutual respect.
4. Common goals through partnerships that share in planning, decision-making and commitment.

As indicated, each partnership is unique, but at in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan the building of each partnership has moved forward through a similar pattern of collaboration. In all cases, one of the initiators of the formalized partnership arrangement was the fact that university instructors and in-service teachers within the divisions had worked together in non-formalized ways to provide “un-programmed”, pre-internship field experiences for teacher candidates. Activities at this stage worked to develop personal, trusting relationships that supported the notion that “town and gown” could work together for mutual benefit. Next, formal partnership arrangements were negotiated between the leadership teams in the School Division and the College of Education. In each case, the arrangement included a pilot project that involved understanding how personnel in volunteer school(s) in the division could work together with a cohort of teacher candidates and their instructors to offer field experiences connected with coursework for the benefit of all involved. Also in each case, the arrangement involved the seconding of a master teacher from the division to work with the pilot project cohort and as a liaison in bridging gaps between the particular culture of the school division and the culture of the college. Following completion of the pilot project(s), which provided evidence of mutual benefit, the next phase of the collaboration has involved broader participation by members of the partnership – that is, more schools in each division have become involved in hosting teacher candidates in field experiences and all teacher candidates now have a partner school in one of the divisions where they are invited to engage in field experiences at least once per week. At the time of writing, we have just moved into the second year of this phase and are continuing to explore with our partners how this collaborative work could evolve.

The three school divisions with whom we have formal partnerships all espouse educational philosophies that include constructivist theoretical understandings. This stance provides a point of agreement within our partnerships. Constructivism is a theory about how people learn. Constructivists argue that individuals create or build new personal knowledge by bringing together that which they already know and believe with new ideas, events, and activities they experience (Cannella & Reiff, 1994; Richardson, 1997). Constructivist learning involves active engagement with content and ideas, inquiry, problem solving, and collaboration rather than passive receiving of information or “truth”. Our program renewal efforts have been shaped by assumptions embedded in constructivism, particularly social constructivist perspectives found in education literature from Dewey (1899) to Vygotsky (1978) and onward. Social constructivism assumes the importance of interactions among people as they build new knowledge and understandings together within particular socio-cultural settings. In translating constructivism from a theory about how people learn to a theory of teaching, we are working to develop our teacher education program to enable development of teachers who are able to operate as guides, facilitators and co-learners who work with students to engage them in questioning, challenging the status quo, and in formulating their own ideas, beliefs and conclusions. Holding these ideas means we need to offer teacher candidates much more autonomy in field experiences. Although at the school division level, superintendents and consultants are very enthusiastic about more constructivist approaches to teaching and learning, policies, programs and, in some cases, established school culture often constrain teachers’ autonomy, and therefore the freedom of teacher candidates to try out innovative approaches during their full term of internship. An important ingredient in evolving our authentic partnership relationships will be the capacity of all to work together to understand, deepen and widen our shared underpinning philosophical assumptions. The formal

partnerships where reciprocity has been most evident have seconded teachers and divisional level staff who are engaged in a range of connections with the university. Particularly successful have been projects where faculty and school staffs have co-taught, where seconded teachers work directly with school staffs they already know, and where seconded teachers bring ideas forward from their own experience to create opportunities for undergraduate students to carry out innovative projects in schools. For instance, one cohort of teacher candidates was involved in a global citizenship project with a class taught by the seconded teacher. Such multiple-layered projects support both schools and teacher candidates in extending their learning. Teachers and faculty who are flexible, innovative and creative flourish in this environment.

### Governance Frameworks

Development of deeper understandings of shared educational philosophies goes to wider issues of governance in teacher education. Falkenberg and Young (2010) point out that “the governance of teacher education in Canada is best understood as being co-constructed through the interplay of government, universities and the teaching profession” (p. 169) and that governance issues related to field experiences generally circulate around three main categories – that is, “funding; regulation (duration, curriculum, and evaluation); and delivery (staffing and site)” (p. 170). While there is no doubt that the interplay between stakeholders is complicated by the fact that each organization has its own set of responsibilities, accountabilities and internal decision-making structures, it seems possible, at least in Saskatchewan with our history of collaborative work in education, that frank and thoughtful discussions with the Ministry of Education, the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, divisional and school-based administrators, as well as teachers, teacher candidates and faculty members could lead to development of a set of foundational principles that could be used by all as guides for subsequent decision-making. As faculty in the College of Education worked to develop content and goals for field experiences and debated how we define success for teacher candidates, it became clear from the sources consulted that other interested parties in the province hold several in-common presumptions.

For example, our program renewal effort in the College of Education is explicitly based on our conviction that working in education must support social justice - this undergirds our commitment to the infusion of Indigenous content, knowledges, perspectives and ways of knowing across courses and field experiences. Examination of documents outlining University of Saskatchewan initiatives and priorities, Ministry of Education policies and directions, and Saskatchewan Teacher Federation policies and bylaws demonstrates this same commitment. For example, the University of Saskatchewan (2003, p. 1) is “seeking ways of enhancing its intellectual partnerships with Aboriginal peoples and is looking for structures that ensure integrity, fairness, and accessibility in the inclusion of indigenous knowledge and cultural expression within the institution”. The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education’s *Goals of Education* (n.d.) document states that “Education should enable Saskatchewan students to: ... work toward greater social justice”, while core curricula (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2007; 2009) indicate that “Education in Saskatchewan should engage with ... First Nations and Métis content and perspectives.” The Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation has “formally recognized

and addressed equity and diversity issues in publicly funded education and the greater society” (*Educational Equity*, 2009, <https://www.stf.sk.ca/>) and acknowledged that “the history and culture of Saskatchewan’s First Nations and Métis require recognition by those within the province’s education system.” (*Code of Professional Ethics*, 2009, Article 10 commentary, <https://www.stf.sk.ca/>).

Although identification of a set of mutually agreed upon foundational principles will not resolve all the tensions and issues related to funding, regulation and delivery of field experiences, it seems that understanding and acknowledgement of our mutual commitments would be a good place to begin discussions about opening up organizational structures that seem to impede innovative decision-making processes in the governance of teacher education. Unfortunately, at present, it remains the case that each organization appears to be working toward transformative education in isolation despite the mutually held goals and aspirations. We hope to break down barriers as we work collaboratively to develop authentic partnership relationships.

### Competency-Based Learning in Teacher Education

There are tensions between a “standards-based” approach to teacher education (which is often based on observable skills and strategy implementation) and the approach that we are advocating in the new undergraduate program at the University of Saskatchewan. Our faculty has a commitment to “place-based” education that considers particular geographic, social and cultural contexts to be paramount in how educational programs are implemented. A primary assumption (that learning occurs in particular contexts, and is best studied in action and use), which lies behind development of our renewed approach to field experiences, is connected to a theoretical position labeled the “situative perspective” (Greeno, 1997; Greeno, Collins, & Resnick 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Putnam & Borko, 2000). Similar to social constructivism, three main ideas underpin this way of thinking: that cognition and learning are (1) situated in particular contexts; (2) social in nature; and (3) distributed across people, resources and tools (Putnam & Borko, 2000).

Along with situative theorists (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991), we take the position that knowing and learning are not individualistic functions of the human mind nor based purely on individual experience. Our approach to field experience is based on the notion that cognition takes place within particular physical and social contexts which deeply influence how and what people learn – that is, that what we know, how we know it, and how we express ideas, are products of interactions within groups of people, or within *discourse communities* (Fish, 1980; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Resnick, 1991). According to Putnam and Borko (2000), “discourse communities provide the cognitive tools – ideas, theories, and concepts – that individuals appropriate as their own through their personal efforts to make sense of experiences.” (p. 5)

The situative perspective argues strongly for the notion that learning activities must be “authentic” – that is, that learning activities should share contextual features with the “real life” situation for which the learner is being prepared. This supports the notion that teacher education should be situated within classrooms, however, the situative perspective also helps us see why learning in real life classrooms can be a powerful tool for reinforcing “traditional”

or status quo approaches to teaching, because of the strength of existing schooling culture.

To ameliorate the power of existing school culture in the learning of teacher candidates during field experiences, we take the position that teaching and learning (or the field of education, in general) should be perceived as a *complex* rather than a *complicated* system (Clarke & Collins, 2007). In a complicated system, there are many variables but these are often laid out hierarchically and can be predicted. In a complex system, predictability is rare and variables are generally networked rather than laid out hierarchical structures. As complex systems are networked, ideas and materials can travel in multiple directions and can loop back upon themselves. This feedback process means that control and organization, order and direction, do not emanate from a single point or location“ (Clarke & Collins, 2007, p. 166).

Perceiving education as a complex system has important implications for the field experiences we plan as part of our program. Cooperating teachers must be open to change and flexibility and interns need to be perceived as “individual learners”, each with their own particular learning needs. All involved need to understand that simple mimicking of cooperating teachers is not a powerful learning experience for teacher candidates – interns must be provided with opportunities for making choices, improvising, risk-taking, problem-solving and decision-making. This means that we must take into account the fact that every internship experience is different by using a more flexible assessment and evaluation approach. Expecting interns to “conform neatly to a predetermined set of practices [or fixed norms] and at the same time maximize their learning is highly improbable” (Clarke & Collins, 2007, p. 181).

Development of our *Professional Growth Guide* (PGG) was undertaken with the idea that flexibility in assessment and evaluation is a must. As mentioned, our *Guide* includes the goals and learning outcomes of our program and is designed to help teacher candidates make links between their on-campus courses and field experiences using a self-monitoring approach. (For further details, please see: [www.usask.ca/education/program/fieldexperiences/pgg-teacher-candidates.pdf](http://www.usask.ca/education/program/fieldexperiences/pgg-teacher-candidates.pdf) ) In addition, cooperating teachers working with interns are encouraged to assist interns using a learning-focused supervision model (Lipton & Wellman, 2007; for further details, please see: [www.usask.ca/education/program/fieldexperiences/dynamic-tool-kit/supervision.php](http://www.usask.ca/education/program/fieldexperiences/dynamic-tool-kit/supervision.php)). We think that replacement of checklists and other such documents formerly used in internship evaluation with the PGG approach allows for flexibility and uncertainty, supporting our supposition that education is a complex system. The *Professional Growth Guide* is currently a fairly open list of “competencies”; interns and mentor teachers gather evidence of progress towards these goals, but there is no requirement for “measured” achievement of the goals beyond qualitative observation.

### **Responding to Diversity and Pluralism**

While we are committed to assisting teacher candidates develop a high degree of competency, we are also driven by the desire to prepare teachers who strive toward social justice and who engage in education as transformative praxis. This requires a coherent program, with course work and field experiences that challenge the beliefs, attitudes and presuppositions of teacher candidates and supports them in developing understandings about the histories and experiences of diverse social groups and how to work with multi-identified students.



(McDonald, 2007) We are striving to develop a renewed program that includes course work which engages teacher candidates in an exploration of anti-racist and anti-oppressive education and in the examination of how to include Aboriginal and multicultural knowledges and perspectives in teaching and learning. We have also built into the PGG requirements for teacher candidates to gather evidence from field experiences to demonstrate that they are reflecting upon and analyzing their growth in understanding the roles of teachers and schools in decolonizing education, building inclusive communities, incorporating Aboriginal and multicultural content and perspectives and in taking a leadership role in seeking to improve social and environmental conditions.

### Challenges and “Successes”

The organization of pilot projects has been simplified and extended to all teacher candidates in the sequential program route. At the current time, all incoming teacher candidates are assigned a partner school, and in most cases their introductory education course (focused on the philosophy of curriculum and the craft of teaching) is taught by a seconded teacher, faculty member, or a field experience coordinator. Some of the classes are taught in the schools, and there is an expectation that assignments for the course will be carried out in classrooms.

There are still difficulties in persuading all instructors of a particular cohort to meet and plan together; some of the difficulties are inherent in the program structure – for example, the complexities of the secondary sequential program route make it impossible to organize teacher candidates in this route into sustainable cohorts. On the other hand, some of the difficulties in persuading all instructors of a particular cohort to meet and plan together are embedded in understandings about the time and energy tenure-track faculty should funnel into their teaching duties. With real or perceived assumptions about what “counts” toward achievement of tenure and promotion, some instructors are reluctant to engage in the team/relationship-building processes required for meaningful collaborative instruction. Concerns such as these have been and are voiced in a variety of settings in the College – including “brown-bag lunch” program renewal discussions, new faculty mentoring meetings and in Faculty Council. These concerns are real and we need to continue to build the evidence (first emerging our pilot projects) to support the idea that collaborative teaching and learning is ultimately beneficial for both learners and instructors. (We are also finding it helpful that the collective culture at the University of Saskatchewan is beginning to shift toward an acknowledgement of the importance of a focus on learning and exemplary teaching – see new teaching awards and draft versions of a “learning charter”, as examples).

Schools are quite varied in their responses to having large numbers of teacher candidates working with them. Surprisingly, small schools sometimes manage this easily, while larger schools are less open to seeing themselves as teacher educators. In addition, while all teacher candidates are introduced to the PGG and mentored in use of the *Guide* to record learning from field experiences in their initial partner school placements (in the first year of professional study the focus is on teacher identity and competence), some partner teachers remain unfamiliar with (and in some cases unconvinced by) the notion of teacher candidates recording evidence of personal progress toward achievement of program goals.

The requirement for use of the *Professional Growth Guide* is more intense during internship; during this extended field experience, a record of progress towards all six of the goals is expected. During the sixteen-week internship, interns are encouraged to team teach and co-plan with other interns, as well as with their co-operating teachers. Also, starting in September 2009, interns are required to demonstrate evidence of planning for the inclusion of Aboriginal content and ways of knowing in at least one of the units approved by the college supervisor and co-operating teacher.

The small changes that have been made so far in field experiences will help as we plan for the role of field study in the new program. As of yet, the supervision model has changed only slightly. We are using a cognitive coaching approach in 2009 and are explicitly recognizing that conversations about teaching may be at least as valuable as watching a “teaching performance”. Because we have interns in some fairly remote rural areas, we are experimenting with using blogs and other forms of electronic communication. In the new program, we may reduce the number of supervisory visits to school in favour of more local seminars for interns and teachers. Our current plan for the new program is to have two days per week in schools during the first year of professional study. If school personnel are to remain open to such increased participation, we will need to better facilitate understandings about ways in which teacher candidates can contribute in meaningful ways to the life of the school while retaining their roles as learners/novice teachers.

While we have received positive feedback about our newer approach to field experiences, many challenges remain. For example, we continue to puzzle over how to shift the College’s collective culture around field experiences in order to involve all (or at least almost all) faculty. This is a tension-filled exercise, as this approach makes teaching and learning more transparent. One of the mechanisms which may assist in shifting our collective culture is to provide support for developing research projects that would engage faculty in exploring the merits of our new approaches to field experiences. We imagine that such research would involve both quantitative and qualitative data gathering approaches and interpretive methodologies (depending upon the particular kind of question under investigation). Use of a variety of approaches could appeal to members of our faculty as these scholars would be encouraged to utilize research methodologies familiar to them. We anticipate that the results of such research would be of great value in exploring questions about the efficacy of field experiences as results would arise from multiple approaches and multiple perspectives.

Further, communication, organization and clarity are challenges in an emergent design and these issues are on-going challenges when dealing with a variety of divisional partners who all work in different ways and in different contexts. On top of this, field experiences do and will look different in each partner school, which means that all involved need to be fluid and flexible. When we first introduced our Professional Growth Guide, teachers were confused and somewhat angry that the “internship manual”, which had been virtually unchanged for years, had suddenly disappeared. Some teachers continued to use the old manual surreptitiously in the first year of implementation of the new assessment approaches to the internship. However, as we sought feedback from co-operating teachers and school divisions, and as field experience staff grew more expert in anticipating problems, the resistances diminished. Although we have no quantitative evidence, we suspect that we now have a slightly different pool of mentor teachers, including more of our own graduate students.

As indicated, stakeholders have provided feedback indicating where our newer approaches to field experiences have been successful. For example, College faculty who have been most deeply engaged in pilot projects and our newer approach to field experiences are pleased by the increased opportunities for teacher candidates to carry out school-based assignments without faculty needing to make special, individual arrangements. They also comment that they have been enabled in sharing the work of teaching with colleagues across departments and that in building collegial relationships with schools there has been great potential for developing research and graduate work connections. For school divisions and in-service teachers, we have noted that there has been a renewed culture of professional development as the opportunity to work more closely with university faculty has offered them the chance to influence teacher education. Teachers have expressed their support for having a pool of enthusiastic, well-educated adults to work with their students in their classrooms. School divisions are also happy to have the more intense and extended opportunity to get to know potential future teachers. Finally, engaging in earlier and wider ranging kinds of experiences (across subject areas and grade levels, for example) has been eye-opening for teacher candidates. Some came to understand that teaching is not for them, while others found that they broadened their focus from their original choices about grade level and subject area preferences. We have noted that changes in our approach to field experiences have helped teacher candidates make better theory/practice connections as they engage in more opportunities to develop their teacher identity, professional skills and sense of community with peers and future colleagues.

All of this provides encouragement as we move forward with designing of our renewed teacher education program. We will always face challenges and tensions arising from contending views about the role of field experiences, but there is no doubt about the power of professional learning that explores theory in practice.

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# Chapter 14

## *Bridging the Theory-Practice Divide: Teaching Science Methods off Campus*

RONALD J. MACDONALD

*In Canadian teacher education there has been a traditional division of labour where theory-laden teacher education coursework is located in and supported by the university or college. Conversely, the practicum, with heavy focus on practice, has often been conducted at a separate time from coursework and with relatively little influence from university personnel and concepts learned during coursework. To try to bridge this theory-practice divide, a 2008-2009, qualitative study was engaged whereby a Bachelor of Education senior high methods course was conducted in a local high school, instead of on the university campus. While in the school, course-related assignments were designed to bring pre-service and in-service teachers together, which also provided an immediate feedback loop and reality check for the pre-service-written lessons. Findings suggest that pre-service teachers valued this reality check (among other features provided by the experience) and may be more likely to continue to engage in student-centered learning in their future teaching. In-service teachers also appear to have been re-invigorated through the experience and spoke of incorporating more of these student-centered activities into their own teaching.*

### Background

#### *The Theory Practice Divide: Assumptions about Teacher Education*

In Canadian teacher education there is a traditional division of labour where theory-laden teacher education coursework is located in and supported by the university or college. Very often there is little in-service (teachers currently teaching in school) influence upon the development of and teaching of these university courses. Conversely, in the practicum placement teacher education instructors have relatively little influence upon the practice of teaching or the pre-service/in-service teacher relationship as it is the in-service teacher who primarily directs how and what pre-service teachers will teach. This appears to have led to a 'theory-practice' divide in pre-service teacher education. This divide may cause a lack of uptake of educational theory in the practice of teaching as well as the lack of practice-based influence on university-taught educational theory. How can both worlds gain from each other? How can there be a common ground where both locations merge into a new third space?

### ***Pre-service Teacher Learning***

Teachers in schools, however, may already have solutions to many educational problems (Bereiter, 2005), such as addressing the theory-practice divide. What counts as knowledge in teacher education is not only that gained from university coursework but also significantly derived from experiences with schools and teachers in the field. If this is true then experienced in-service teachers may need to play a stronger role in the development of new teachers. This in-service teacher expertise could be called upon to contribute to university coursework. Stronger links between university coursework and schools may be needed. Furthermore, research has suggested that researchers' and practitioners' (in-service and pre-service teachers') roles may need to be blurred which could result in a synergistic relationship whereby all may benefit (Broekkamp & van Hout-Wolters, 2007). Recent research has also specifically called for efforts to close the theory-practice divide by strengthening cooperative relationships between the university faculty, pre-service teachers and schools (Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005).

### ***In-Service Teacher Learning***

Another potential benefit of intentionally linking university coursework to schools could be the provision of in-service teacher professional development experiences. Meta analyses conducted by Reitzug (2002) resulted in the identification of eight characteristics for effective teacher professional development. Of these eight, the following four appear to support the linking of university coursework to schools: professional development opportunities should be co-constructed with in-service teachers; professional development should be school-based; professional development should involve collaborative problem solving in a community of learners; professional development should be ongoing and result in change in teacher practices. One way to support these four characteristics could be to place teacher education coursework in schools, where collaborative and mutually beneficial pre-service and in-service relationships could be supported.

### ***Research Questions***

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How can housing university coursework in a school affect pre-service teacher learning and in-service teachers' practice?
2. How can stronger links between these two spaces be built?

## **Methods**

### ***Participants***

Pre-service teachers in a two-semester science methods course along with in-service high school science teachers from a local high school participated in this study. All of the 12 students from this course, along with all science teachers from the school were asked to

volunteer. Six of the 12 pre-service teachers along with six in-service teachers volunteered to be part of the data collection process.

### ***The Innovation***

This past academic year (2008-2009) I have attempted to build stronger links to school. I am not alone in this effort as six other teacher educators/researchers from across Canada are also engaged in similar “linking projects”, including Dr. Thomas Falkenberg and Dr. Karen Goodnough. My research addresses this theory-practice divide by moving my University of Prince Edward Island science methods class from the university campus to a local high school. This coursework took place over two semesters and was done at a separate time from their practicum. We conducted our classes just after high school students were dismissed for the day. Even though we were there after school, we had significant contact with in-service teachers and high school students.

While just being in the schools, using the equipment, interacting with students and teachers may help bridge the theory-practice divide, a further activity was intentionally designed to help build stronger links between the world of pre-service and in-service teachers. That is, an assignment was created to physically bring both groups together. This assignment was conducted in the following manner:

1. A meeting with pre-service and in-service teacher volunteers was held to align in-service teachers’ curriculum areas with students’ interests.
2. The pre-service teachers (two per group) and the in-service teacher collectively identified a curriculum area from which a hands-on activity was built.
3. The pre-service teacher then created or modified an active learning experience or laboratory activity to fit the needs of the in-service teacher and school students. (My particular hope was to have this new activity innovatively address the particular area of curriculum, as well as build school students’ inquiry skills.)
4. The pre-service teacher met with the teacher to discuss and amend the new activity (although this did not occur as frequently as hoped).
5. The pre-service teacher conducted the new activity with our science methods class.
6. After receiving feedback from our class members, a re-write was done, which was taken back to the in-service teacher for their approval.
7. The pre-service teacher then conducted the activity in the in-service teacher’s classroom or laboratory.
8. Pre-service debriefing, reflection, and a re-write of the activity then occurred.
9. This activity was then given to the in-service teacher.

### ***Data Collection***

For research ethical reasons (as I teach these students) pre-service teachers were interviewed at the end of the course. In-service teachers were also interviewed at this time. Accuracy of the transcriptions were confirmed through a review by a second reader. While this post analysis did not give a measure of change over time, I feel that this qualitative data was valuable to

suggest some successes and failures in my attempt to bridge the theory-practice divide. I also assessed their notions of what was successful in their lesson-planning and explored with the interviewees (both in-service and pre-service) the ways in which conducting course-work in the local school may have contributed to choices made during their lesson-planning.

### ***Data Analysis***

The audio-taped interviews, were analyzed through constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to identify themes. Initial analysis built broad categories and as analysis continued, these were subdivided into narrower ones, which were then coded into preliminary themes. These themes were then further sub-divided into narrower themes, or merged with others, as an in-depth analysis of the data was engaged (Krathwohl, 1997). *Nvivo* qualitative data analysis software was used to help in this process. An independent inter-rater reliability procedure was carried out to verify coding. Participants (in-service and pre-service teachers) helped validate themes as they were provided with a copy of these themes, from which they provided feedback. Pseudonyms are used when reporting findings.

## **Findings**

Data analysis resulted in 25 initial themes, which upon further analysis coalesced into ten themes. The six most dominant themes, which were most relevant to the research question, are presented in this paper.

### ***School Experiences Matter***

One of the most dominant, recurring, themes was the value that pre-service and in-service teachers saw in grounding the university coursework in the realities of school. One pre-service teacher represents this by saying,

Yeah I think that was good for a lot of people, just even to see the high school setting before you can get to the course material and the program. But again, having the resources, seeing the different types of labs-the physics lab, the chem. lab, the bio lab, see what they have, see what they deal with. You bump into teachers constantly, you bump into administrators constantly. It's really the best case scenario. (Mike, pre-service teacher)

This pre-service teacher spoke of the shock that they experienced when first arriving to do their coursework at the school:

So being in a high school laboratory is really the best thing you can do. Because you see what resources you have. You're actually, running through the halls at the end of the day, seeing the school environment at its high point or high traffic and everything like that, that was a shock to some people, like when we first started it. (Mike, pre-service teacher)



One in-service teacher, Francine, sums up this common finding: “I think it’s great that the students come in here. It’s good for them, it’s good for us, for them they get to see the reality of what a school is like. People being around and the atmosphere.” Another in-service teacher also goes so far as to say that this kind of in-context learning is essential:

I don’t know how you learn it other than experience and some ways of getting the sense of when you’re going far enough and when you have to, you’re just continually making decisions all the time about kids, about how far I’m going to go, what I’m going to assign, what I’m going to get done, it’s just a, you just look at it and you go like ‘yeah it’s just a lot of experience’. (Kathy, in-service teacher)

A third in-service teacher, George, refers to the unexpected realities that pre-service teachers may need to fully appreciate working in schools: “And our lab time was shortened, but they came in and they modified their lab and responded to that and I mean that’s a real world experience, that is, that’s gonna happen.”

In-service teachers also noted the surprise that pre-service teachers had around the realities of school, as well as the value of getting exposed to these realities:

That is a bit of an eye opener for some, for students when they come like, this is what I think I can do, this is what I want to do verses now you have 34 children in front of you, what can you actually do? And what are the students ability? Like, how much little, of the little things do you need to explain that you think they’re going to understand? Which they don’t. ...So that is an eye opening experience and if they could get that experience before they come through that would be unbelievable. (Lynn, in-service teacher)

This teacher, who represents this consistent theme, continues to refer to the many pragmatic realities teaching in a science laboratory. She suggests that showing pre-service teachers these realities will benefit:

So I had to explain to them, I think they pictured a class of maybe 20, so when I said that there was, because our lab is sort of set up for 32 and there’s going to be some 3s rather than pairs and they were explaining stuff and I was explain ‘no they need to be at their stations’ so less walking the better because with 35 people in the room I don’t want to see them walking all over the place. I want to see them get their stuff and have it at their desk. And they were kinda thrown by that and so I think the reality of being with the students and how many there are is also something for them. (Lynn, in-service teacher)

Another important reality was the idea that pre-service teachers did not know the financial constraints of schools, as represented by the limited budget devoted to photocopying. One in-service teacher, Kathy, stated, “What would be another thing I would say? Photocopying. So they had a 6 page or 7 page handout that each kid was supposed to have to fill out and I said ‘no we’ll do one handout per group’.”

One pre-service teacher valued the experience and pragmatism provided by the in-service teacher as she noted the need for deconstructing lessons and putting them back into smaller pieces:

I learned just how small you have to break things down for high school students. After 4-5 years of university, you forget that not everyone knows what you know about a particular material/experiment. ... For me, this was the most useful part and one that definitely improved my second practicum. (Cynthia , pre-service teacher)

### ***Communication Needed***

While plans were made to bring pre-service and in-service teachers together, it appears that there was still a need for further communication between these two groups of people. A theme, identified as “Communication Needed” repeatedly arose.

One pre-service teacher, Sarah, stated, “We really did not have that much communication with our rural teacher other than the topic and the time we were to carry it out.” Another student, Cynthia, echoed this need: “I think it would have been easier to see the teacher face to face at least once to discuss further the lab in hard copy with the three of us. As we all understand the time constraints of teachers, email worked well.” Yet, another pre-service teacher, John, stated that “Yeah they would probably have a better idea but it might have been a communication. We had emails but that only goes so far.”

In-service teachers also mirrored the need for more communication. Susan said, “Schedule at least one more face-to-face meeting, set deadlines for a draft of the activity.” Susan also related, “I found that there was not enough contact with the UPEI students prior to the activity. I would have liked to see a draft copy of what they were doing earlier than the day before.”

While the research plans included some formalized plans to facilitate communication between the pre-service and in-service teachers, it was left to these individuals to make these connections. It appears this was not done. One teacher suggested that pre-service teachers need to be more flexible for the sake of the time that in-service teachers devoted to this work:

Just remind students that this is an important project and that teachers are taking their time to let them come in so that they should be flexible with their schedule, I know that a few people had problems with some students couldn't do stuff because they were going away and stuff like that. (George, in-service teacher)

June, another in-service teacher, also revealed that teachers' busy schedules need to be acknowledged: “Because if it becomes too challenging for a teacher here, in terms of special time restraints and time to meet with people I think you'll find that, if it were me and it became too much of a challenge then I'd back out. Because it's just too hard.”

On the other hand, some in-service teachers suggested that they could have provided more support for the pre-service teachers,

I was thinking they're going to get all this stuff together and they're going to come see me. Maybe I thought that they were a little bit more, like, I don't know how to describe it, like maybe I should have been a little more helpful. (Lynn, in-service teacher)

### *Logistics Are Difficult*

Getting to and from the school, scheduling issues and the weather were some of the other pragmatic realities that affected the coursework in the school. The following passage suggests some of these issues:

And that was happening because of the storm issues where one would get postponed until the next day but then that one, there was another class going to happen on that day. And we did work it out so that well I would be able to get 6 available [data loggers] but you [pre-service teacher] can't make all those assumptions that everything's just going to be there. It takes time to round up the equipment and you have to make sure that other teachers aren't using it and that the lab are available because we have a lab schedule and all those mechanics of making up work. And I didn't have, that wasn't the experience with my student teachers, or pre-service teachers that that was going to happen but I could see that would be a potential. (June, in-service teacher)

Lynn, reiterated the lack of flexibility of some pre-service teachers to conduct their lesson in the in-service teachers' laboratory. She relates,

Because they had classes and a couple of them had jobs and so it was, like they were basically like 'we can do it on Friday'. ... I know and I was like 'I'm ready for it Wednesday' and we did have a storm day I think before that so that got me closer so I was managing to push it a day later than I wanted and then it stormed again and they couldn't do it and I was like 'I'm sorry but we're just going to have to move forward'. (Lynn, in-service teacher)

### *The Theory-Practice Divide*

One pre-service teacher noted the tension between theoretically-based, university-taught pedagogies and the real world of teacher practice:

You can only do so much when you're in a classroom, there's always going to be student say. I remember hearing from someone that said 'well that's the classroom, this is reality'. Look at practicum, seeing that okay well that was all nice and good, what we talked about there, but in reality we have to teach like this. Which is not entirely true, probably just a comment said, off the cuff, but there's some people who do think like that. (John, pre-service teacher)

Data revealed that the most common perception of the theory-practice divide resides in the apparent opposing pedagogies of direct teaching and discovery learning. These opposing pedagogies, according to both pre-service and in-service teachers, may play out in two locations -- discovery learning (university coursework) and direct teaching (the school). One pre-service teacher represents this idea, along with the difficulty in making a pedagogical choice:

I guess I'm just talking about direct teaching vs. discovery learning would be a good one, it's kinda a main one that it all revolves around I would say. It's really

hard not to teach directly all the time, and I think our science methods course went a long way for showing why that's a bad way and to encourage us not to do that but when we got out to, I guess I'll talk about practicum, when we got out there, especially the first semester when we got out there it's your first time in a classroom and it's very intimidating, we kinda almost mirror, almost as closely, our co-op teachers. And if our co-op teachers are still teaching very directly, that just comes out. It's almost like we need, we'll grab onto the best guidance we have. Co-op teachers were great, I really enjoyed my co-op teacher, and she was a fantastic teacher but she was very direct. I tried to bring some indirect in but it was very hard first semester being out there for the first time. (John, pre-service teacher)

Another pre-service teacher suggests that conducting the university course in the school, along with the course assignment, may have provided a comfortable mix of theory and practice:

I think I'm a critical person in general so I like, I love, it's actually fun for me and a little bit of passion to take someone else's ideas or take theories, take what I'm told here and compare it to what you see and you know if I find somewhere in the middle that I'm comfortable with, that I think, I think I have a pretty good...ah you know, radar about what should be going on in a classroom. So if I find that, 'oh great, this is what they were talking about and this would be really helpful', you know, I love that. But I like finding somewhere in the middle that I'm comfortable with and that I think, you know the students benefit from. This particular course I'm more towards 'okay I can take right from our course and apply it directly to the classroom' and I think that's the best way to do it, but a lot of them, you know, I like finding somewhere in the middle, some of them I was just like 'I don't even know what you're talking about. That's not applicable at all'. (Mike, pre-service teacher)

An in-service teacher also appears to value the teaching practice, as opposed to talking about teaching practice. For her, the practice may be valued more than the discussion of theory:

I mean it is a really good opportunity for them to build a connection with the school and a really good opportunity to get out and teach, because it is something that people do complain about. You know, all we do is listen to people tell us how to teach. This is it. This is what people are asking for. (George, in-service teacher)

### ***In-Service Teacher Reinivation***

A theme emerged that suggested that in-service teachers valued the exposure to pre-service teachers' "open-eyed look" at teaching. One teacher represents this idea and also suggests that a balance is necessary:

Yeah because it's like the same at first you come, not that you're naïve but you're, you want to teach the whole world and you want to make them all little chem. majors and you just want to be so, and then you get into the curriculum and you're just like driven, it's like go, go, go, one thing right after another. And somewhere you lose some of that open-eyed look that they have. ...Then I realized I have to

balance the, let them do a little bit of that but keep it in line. (Lynn, in-service teacher)

In-service teachers consistently stated that they enjoyed having and working with pre-service teachers in the school. It was found that these teachers even felt reinvigorated through the experience:

I liked that the classes were going on here. Sometimes I felt that I was probably in the way when you know that it's a class that's going on. But it was good to see them and their enthusiasm and their like, idealism sort of thing. (Kathy, in-service teacher)

Lynn also suggested that new perspectives are important:

I think it's awesome, like the idea of the kids being able to come and for them to have, like when you start teaching you're kind of, you have the curriculum and you're bound and you keep moving and you have labs and you have assignments so it's nice to see the new perspective. (Lynn, in-service teacher)

An in-service teacher, Kathy, related that she recognized that they were learning new ways to teach: "Um, just being open to a new way of doing things, right? Like I wouldn't have necessarily done what they did and that was really good." A fresh look at assignments was voiced as important by Lynn, "And their ideas, because you sometimes, you just get pigeon-holed into ideas that are already there so it's nice to see the fresh look on different types of assignments."

Yet one more quotation appears to support the idea that pre-service teachers appreciated the exposure to new teaching strategies that were done by pre-service teachers. One in-service teacher, June, expresses that this exposure increased her confidence to change her teaching practice: "We get away from some of these new teaching strategies because we're not exposed to them and it's one thing to read about them but, for myself, my comfort level goes way up if I see somebody else do it first."

### ***Reciprocal Learning***

A dominant theme emerged which suggests that all teachers learned from each other. One pre-service teacher represents this finding:

I liked working with a "seasoned" teacher as well as a partner; this made a small seed of an idea bloom. We were able to, with three sets of eyes, see faults with the experiment, areas of confusion as well as decide the amount of information to give to the students. (Cynthia, pre-service teacher)

It appears that the realities of teaching in schools were learned through communications with in-service teachers:

In discussions with Kathy [pseudonym], as ideas were emailed to me I was able to go to Susan, you know will this work and discuss timelines, and is it realistic and

some things we had to cut out because it would be too long and some things you know, were perfect and were just you need to keep that because this is going to lead to this so it was really nice for me to have, you know, the thought process that should go into the lab. (George, pre-service teacher)

Conversely, it was also consistently found that in-service teachers learn from pre-service teachers. One in-service teacher noted that that it was good to see other ways of teaching:

And I remember, I was like ‘oh no I just do this’ but then that’s always good for me to see the other way too because once you get teaching, that’s what I was mentioning, you just kinda you look at the other stuff and you see other stuff but you see that way, so it’s good to see other ways. And sometimes it’s better and sometimes they’re not as good. (Lynn, in-service teacher)

Another teacher echoes this finding by talking about how pre-service teachers’ use of data logging technology helped the in-service teacher learn:

I think what sparked our interaction was the new territory for all of us. Some of the other students who were taking a new technology [data loggers] and showing teachers how to use them, making them the experts and the teachers the students. (Susan, in-service teacher)

The fact that our coursework was conducted after school provided in-service teachers with the opportunity to drop by. In fact, they were encouraged to do so. All of the in-service teachers in the study came by to our classroom at least once. This was appreciated by the in-service teachers.

One pre-service teacher noted this and also expressed his appreciation that in-service teachers valued what we were doing:

Well, we always had people poking their heads in or they were cleaning up the lab and we were in there sort of thing and you know they’d show interest, they’d ask what we were doing, you know. And you see it actually ‘oh it actually does relate to what they’re teaching’. They’re like ‘oh you know I haven’t gotten to that part yet in my class but we’re doing that next month’ or something like that and you’re like ‘oh, what we’re doing in our course is directly related to what we’ll be doing if we’re teaching science class’, which you don’t see in a lot of these courses, like UPEI courses, in my opinion. (Mike, pre-service teacher)

### ***Impact on the University Coursework***

It appears that pre-service teachers valued learning from each other. One student represents this consistent finding by saying, “I also enjoyed seeing the other labs as they have given me ideas to use in my own classroom.” Another student also relates the value of learning from each other:

I enjoyed working closely with a partner from class on a science lab that was not in my expertise. It showed me that I can take an idea and create a fun lab out of those ideas. Being able to then bring this lab to a classroom environment with a real

classroom audience put our hard work to use which in turn paid off for all persons involved. (Lindsay, pre-service teacher)

Yet another student echoes this notion:

If we had not had the access to the labs and materials at the high school I feel that it would have limited the creativity that we could put into our assigned projects. In turn it allowed our class to think big, learn from others thinking big and initiate further reflection and growth in skills and creativity. (Sarah, pre-service teacher)

## Discussion

One research question asked, how does one build stronger links between universities and schools? According to the findings, two requirements for building stronger links between the university and the school are the need for built-in structured communication between the pre-service teachers and in-service teachers, and the need to attend to logistical details. Both pre-service and in-service teachers suggest that providing for more formalized meeting/collaborating times is essential. While this study suggests that significant benefits were gained for pre-service and in-service teachers alike, the logistics of moving locations and the omnipresent difficulties with communication between pre-service and in-service teachers may easily dissuade other teacher education programs from adopting this structural change to teacher education. Is it worth the effort?

From the perspectives of both pre-service and in-service teachers it seems apparent that it is worth the effort. Pre-service teachers very much valued the expertise and the lived experiences of in-service teachers. In the context of discussing and exploring university course-based notions of what makes a good lesson, the pragmatic realities of the school – as guided by the course assignment – may have yielded pre-service teachers who wish to continue to move away from the seemingly apparent dominant, direct teaching paradigm. Pre-service teachers in this study suggest that they will continue to incorporate student-centered, inquiry-based, activities which tend to go against the norm. Pre-service teachers, according to this study, feel pressure to conform to the dominant paradigm when they enter their practicum placements. Importantly, the reality checks provided by in-service teachers may have provided that extra support which may be needed to overcome practical, real world challenges which could have resulted in pre-service teachers reverting to direct teaching. Concomitant university coursework and pre-service teaching in the context of a real world classroom may be leading to pre-service teachers who want to rise to the challenge of continuing student-centered lesson planning and teaching. Housing the university course in school may have provided a context whereby mutually beneficial relationships between pre-service and in-service teachers gained. A future longitudinal study could be done to further examine this possibility.

A specific research question asked how housing university coursework in a school affects pre-service teacher learning and in-service teachers' practice? From the findings, one may infer that many of the learning and teaching benefits that pre-service and in-service teachers enjoyed could be gained by maintaining the duality of coursework at the university campus and practicum placements at schools. It appears, however, that the immediacy of putting their coursework into practice may have resulted in pre-service teachers' appreciation

of the apparent need to be aware of the pragmatic requirements of planning for and working within the bounds of real world classrooms and laboratories. Having pre-service teachers put their course-based lessons immediately into practice in the in-service teachers' classroom was identified by participants as providing an immediate and valued form of feedback.

The relationships between the pre-service and in-service teachers were noted by all to be held in high regard. According to Reitzug (2002) one of the essential teacher professional development needs is to locate these experiences in the context of in-service teachers' work. Findings from the study appear to suggest that holding university coursework in schools, where mutually beneficial and collaborative pre-service and in-service teacher relationships are forged, may be challenging in-service teachers to examine their pedagogical choices. They appear to be re-invigorated by the interaction with pre-service teachers through the partnership of developing the active learning experiences. Evidence of this re-invigoration was apparent in the interviews, as well as with the fact that at one time or another, all of the participating in-service teachers dropped by and participated in our science methods class. Could building pre-service and in-service teacher collaborative relationships result in in-service teacher re-examination of their teaching practice? Our study does suggest that teachers are at least considering doing this. Interestingly, on a recent visit to one of the volunteer in-service teacher's laboratory, she was using the pre-service teacher designed activities. More data gathering needs to be done, but it appears that in-service teachers are, indeed, adopting less traditional, student-centered experiences for their teaching.

While it appears that the university coursework conducted in the school may have helped build stronger links between these two places, the feasibility of scaling this up may be problematic. If all methods classes were to be conducted in schools, logistical and communication issues may become daunting. If, however, the building of reciprocal learning relationships is the salient and valued feature of this study, then university coursework may not be necessarily take place in schools.

The findings from this study raise some important questions: could something similar to the pre-service/in-service collaborative assignment be done in a practicum model?; how does what was done in this study affect pre-service teacher learning in their practicum? Firstly, it was found that providing pre-service teachers with instructor supported and monitored opportunities to build and carry out theoretically-based active learning experiences may not mesh well with their practicum learning experiences. Pre-service teachers related that they struggled with the juxtaposition of the coursework lessons and their practicum experiences. Brouwer & Korthagen (2005) suggest that high levels of collaboration between the pre-service, in-service and teacher education faculty are needed. Should there also now be a fourth person brought in to collaborate? Should the course instructor (and what was done in the course assignment) become part of this collaborative group? Doing this, while not insurmountable, may bring a whole other set of logistical and communication issues, but may be necessary to continue to value pre-service teachers' learning and experiences.

## **Conclusion**

In a recent review of Canadian teacher education programs it was found that a dissonance exists between academic knowledge gained at the university and that gained in the school



practicum (Gambhir, Broad, Evans, & Gaskell, 2008). To address this dissonance, various models, which attempt to build stronger university-school relationships, are being developed. According to this report, strong relationships between the university and the school may help deepen understandings and lead to a more fluid integration of theory and practice.

To help make teacher education program decisions in the Canadian context the data collection and analysis conducted in this study may help inform the growing body of knowledge of how to build stronger links between universities and schools. By gathering data on particular programs and their innovations it may then be possible to collate this, along with other findings from other Canadian teacher education programs. This collection of salient and cross-country findings may then be employed to point the way to common successful approaches for Canadian teacher education.

Findings from this study assert that the time-lag between when university coursework is conducted and pre-service teacher practicum is experienced may not support theoretically-based coursework learnings and experiences. The pressure for pre-service teachers to conform to the practicum norms and procedures may be too dominant, and therefore result in coursework learning and practices being lost. Concomitant coursework and pre-service teaching experiences in schools may be necessary. What that may look like, however, has not yet been discovered. What is essential, though, is that all involved in the lives of pre-service teachers may need to collaboratively contribute a community of supportive learners.

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# Chapter 15

## *The Potential Role of Field Experiences in Teacher Education Programs*

ANDREA K. MARTIN and TOM RUSSELL

*Teacher candidates often experience a tension between theory and practice, seeing theory as a “washout” when compared to practicum experiences. This fundamental problem can be attributed to teacher education pedagogy and teacher education courses that fail to provide opportunities for extended interrogation of practicum experiences and for the promotion and development of metacognitive thinking about pedagogical practices. If the two worlds of university and school are to be brought into closer contact, teacher education must focus more closely on the learning of candidates, just as we, as teacher educators, encourage candidates to focus on the learning of their students during their practica. We argue that teacher educators must be more attentive to how we teach and how we interact with candidates. The potential role of field experiences is developed beyond “practice teaching,” the most common element. Teacher educators must build on candidates’ field experiences for them to become reflective practitioners capable of reframing their perspectives on pedagogy and understanding the authority of their own experiences. Teacher educators must learn to take a reflective turn if they are to enable candidates to understand the influence of context on teaching. To develop the role of field experiences more fully, teacher educators must provide greater guidance on the processes of interpreting and reframing practicum experiences while adapting their own post-practicum teaching to candidates’ reported experiences.*

Decades ago, Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) published an article with a stimulating but potentially misleading title: *Are the effects of university teacher education “washed out” by school experience?* Their paper continues to be cited by individuals who seem to assume that their answer was affirmative, but careful reading suggests that this was not their conclusion. Rather, they suggested that there seem to be few, if any, effects of university teacher education that could be washed out by school experience. They call attention to Lortie’s (1975) construct of an apprenticeship of observation, whereby prospective teachers learn a great deal about teachers’ pedagogy with virtually no opportunity to understand it. When candidates begin a university teacher education program, education classes tend to have little or no influence on those strong prior views established over years of personal observation of teachers.

To explore the potential role of field experiences in teacher education programs, we begin by noting the tension that teacher candidates often feel between theory and practice in their experiences of a particular program. We next review several recent perspectives on what we know about how teacher education programs are taught and about the importance of candidates’ experiences of teacher education pedagogy. We conclude the discussion by

considering what might be different in teacher education programs in order to enhance the potential role of field experiences in such programs and to reduce the familiar sense that education courses and field experiences are two unrelated elements of a program that demands both coherence and school-university collaboration. We see it as essential for teacher educators to explicitly model productive teaching practices in their classrooms and to foster metacognition in those learning to teach.

### **The Tension between Theory and Practice**

In his ethnographic analysis of a social studies methods course at a major Canadian university, Segall (2002, p. 154) illustrates vividly the tension that those learning to teach often feel between what they see as theory and what they regard as practice:

It becomes clear that beyond the ostensible dispute as to whether student teachers get too much theory or too little of it in university-based courses lie much broader pedagogical questions. Why is it that prospective teachers believe they get too much theory in teacher education courses? . . . And further, if, as Fullan (1991) suggests, the integration of theory and practice is an agreed-on, desirable goal, what conditions, structures, and practices make that integration so elusive?

A teacher candidate named Mary offered this comment to Segall: "The first semester of this program is just all theory and we need to get more practical. Until we get more practical in the program, the theory will still just be a washout" (p. 155).

Teacher educators see theory as an important part of what a new teacher learns, yet if teacher candidates see theory as a washout, what have we accomplished? If there are no significant effects of university teacher education classes to be washed out, what have we achieved? The problem is fundamental, and decades of literature calling for program reform and task forces on program renewal appear not to have addressed this fundamental problem. Within current university and school structures, the most important feature that is within the immediate control of teacher educators is our pedagogy--the ways we teach our courses and the ways we attend to candidates' learning from practicum experiences.

### **What Do We Know about Teacher Education Pedagogy?**

We argue here that teacher education pedagogy is at the heart of the problem. How do we teach pedagogy in our teacher education courses? How do we help students learn to think pedagogically, like a teacher? How are our pedagogical approaches as teacher educators interpreted by those we are helping learn to teach? It is simply not enough to describe to teacher candidates a range of pedagogies that are alternatives to existing teaching practices in schools. It is unfortunate in the first instance when we are perceived to be critical, explicitly or implicitly, of the practices of the very teachers who will soon be supervising our students in their practicum assignments. It is unfortunate in the second instance if we fail to model and explicitly enact and then critique alternative pedagogical practices. Teacher education that hopes to support efforts to improve school practices *must* begin in our teacher education

courses, not in practicum classrooms. If we cannot enact challenging and engaging teaching practices in our education courses, then there will be no effects of university teacher education to be washed out by school experience.

We are drawn to the words of Ayers (2006, p. 270) about the importance of a trusting relationship:

This points to a real problem for teacher educators: If we want our students to break beyond this kind of cramped thinking, how far away from it are we in our own practice? How, for example, are we organizing our teaching for our students to experience something different? Do we (or do the structures of our programs) convey, for example, tacitly or not, a lack of trust? Do we or our programs encourage initiative, criticism, or different thinking? If our students have never experienced the transformative power of a trusting relationship in their own learning, how can we expect them to call up or invent such a disposition when they themselves are the teachers?

In education courses, what do we do and not do with practicum experiences? Where in our teacher education programs are the opportunities for extended interrogation of practicum experiences? Is filling teacher candidates with curriculum facts and documents and tips about possible best practices for teaching so important that we can ignore what teacher candidates are taking from the practicum experiences. Practice teaching is *not* a venue for practicing what teacher educators have preached. Practice teaching, in our view, is first an opportunity for teacher candidates to identify what they have learned previously as students in a very long apprenticeship of observation. Once identified, candidates can begin to challenge and interrogate the teaching moves that they find themselves making by default. Our views here are informed both by our readings of the teacher education research literature and by more than 10 years of practicum supervision experiences in which we have been responsible for all the candidates assigned to one or more elementary or secondary schools.

Where do we provide opportunities to promote and develop strategic and metacognitive thinking about pedagogical practices? We know that such thinking is important for children, and it is equally important for those who need to shift their thinking about teaching from a common-sense perspective to a professional and pedagogical perspective. Darling-Hammond et al. (2008, p. 3) state three “fundamental and well-established principles of learning that are particularly important for teaching”:

1. Students' prior knowledge “must be addressed if teaching is to be effective.” (p. 3)
2. “Students need to organize and use knowledge conceptually if they are to apply it beyond the classroom.” (p. 4)
3. “Students learn more effectively if they understand how they learn and how to manage their own learning.” (p. 4)

They continue by advocating the following research-based practices:

Studies consistently find that highly effective teachers support the process of meaningful learning by:

- Creating *ambitious and meaningful tasks* that reflect how knowledge is used in the field
- Engaging students in *active learning*, so that they apply and test what they know
- Drawing *connections to students' prior knowledge* and experiences
- Diagnosing student understanding in order to *scaffold the learning process* step by step
- *Assessing student learning continuously* and adapting teaching to student needs
- Providing clear *standards*, constant *feedback*, and opportunities for work
- Encouraging *strategic and metacognitive thinking*, so that students can learn to evaluate and guide their own learning”

(Darling-Hammond et al., 2008, p. 5)

There is little value in telling teacher candidates about these conclusions or asking them to read and discuss them. Powerful teacher education requires teacher educators to model these practices and to be explicit about how and why they are doing so. When teacher educators resort to telling in their own classrooms, they are illustrating the enduring impact of their own apprenticeships of observation. Sarason (1996) points directly to the implications of the apprenticeship of observation for the complex nature of preservice teacher education. There is so much that we simply never question.

As observers of schools, we do not come to the task with blank minds. We come with images, expectations, and implicit and explicit attitudes. We come to the task after a long process of socialization and acculturation from which in countless ways, witting and unwitting, we have absorbed conceptions of and attitudes toward school settings. Far from being a random process, acculturation is directed to shaping a person's definition of reality, not only what it is but what it should be. (Sarason, 1996, p. 14)

How, as teacher educators, have we ourselves been shaped by the same acculturation process that our students have experienced? To what extent do those processes influence how we organize and present our courses? We are compelled to conclude that we as teacher educators are caught up in the same conceptions and attitudes that we say we want teacher candidates to avoid or see beyond. Nuthall (2005) led us to this conclusion with a perspective that includes the following statements based on his 4 decades of research into teaching and learning.

It is important to search out independent evidence that the widely accepted routines of teaching are in fact serving the purposes for which they are enacted. We need to find a critical vantage point from outside the routines and their supporting myths. . . . The approach I have learned to take is to look at teaching through the eyes of students and to gather detailed data about the experiences of individual students. (Nuthall, 2005, p. 925)

Clift and Brady (2005, p. 311) extended our interpretation of the challenge when they offered the following conclusion that we find essential in recognizing the importance of attending

systematically and explicitly to individual teacher candidates' beliefs about teaching and learning as they attend education courses and participate in practicum experiences:

Although it is well documented that prospective teachers often feel conflict among the messages they receive from different university instructors, field-based teacher educators, and school settings, it is also the case the prospective teachers resist coherent messages when they find it difficult to engage in recommended practices. When field placements reinforce and support the practices advocated by the teacher education program, individuals may still resist changing beliefs or practices because they are personally uncomfortable with the competing beliefs and practices. Practice and beliefs are mediated by their prior beliefs and experiences, course work, and current perceptions of curriculum, students, pedagogy, and other factors.

Finally, Segall (2002, p. 159) points to what is typically missing from teacher education classroom experiences:

Because prospective teachers are not invited to critically examine the underlying assumptions in educational conventions and practices (Kincheloe, 1993), they tend to ignore not only how those aspects impact their own education as students but also how they will structure their own classrooms in the future. As a result, . . . , student teachers become more interested in learning how to perform expected actions than in analyzing those actions or the expectations that generate such actions.

The several perspectives we have assembled here fit well with our personal experiences as both teachers of education courses and supervisors of practicum experiences. We see little hope for progress in preservice teacher education until teacher educators are able to transform their own teaching in response to these perspectives. Our work with teacher candidates in schools does much more than keep us informed of ongoing developments in the world of teachers' work. That work as practicum supervisors compels us to attend to what candidates are experiencing and how they are learning from those experiences. When we resume our education courses, that knowledge of practicum experiences compels us to work to bring into contact and conversation the two worlds of university and school.

### **What Might Be Different?**

We submit that teacher education needs to focus on learning, not on teaching, yet teaching must be the way that we enact such a focus on learning. Just as we expect teacher candidates to focus on the learning of the students they teach in their practicum experiences, so we as teacher educators must focus on the learning of the teacher candidates in our courses. That learning occurs not only in a range of education courses but also in those field experiences that teacher candidates are convinced are the sine qua non of learning to teach.

Guided by Stenhouse's (1975) perspective on the potential of principles of procedure, we suggest a range of principles to guide the enactment of teacher education pedagogy.

Principles of procedure focus on *how* we teach in order to call our attention to the significance of pedagogy in achieving our goal of a meaningful role for field experiences in teacher education programs. Such principles are not objectives to be achieved by teacher candidates; principles of procedure are principles to guide *how teacher educators interact with candidates in education courses*. Following the adage that actions speak louder than words, we suggest that teacher educators should not expect teacher candidates to enact in their field experiences any pedagogical approaches that they have not seen demonstrated and interrogated in their education courses (Russell, 1999, p. 220, cited in Tryggvason, 2009). We believe that most teacher educators across Canada are generally in agreement about the abilities and qualities we wish to see in those who complete our preservice programs. Yet seemingly overlooked is the need to attend to the importance of how we as teacher educators can contribute in powerful ways to the development of those abilities and qualities. As teacher educators, we tend to make the same assumption that many teachers seem to make: when I close my classroom door and begin to teach, it does not matter what pedagogical approach I use.

Feiman-Nemser and Remillard (1996, p. 78) thoughtfully framed the challenge to teacher educators in the following words:

We have separated the “what” from the “how” of learning to teach in order to focus on the question of what teachers need to learn. Ultimately, content and processes of learning to teach must be brought together, since how teachers learn shapes what they learn and is often part of what they need to know. Unfortunately, we know even less about the processes of learning to teach than we do about the content.

We suggest that the following principles of procedure could guide improvements in preservice teacher education by uniting the what with the how:

- Teacher candidates’ many years of experience as students have generated strong but restricted images of the work of teachers. This prior knowledge must be confronted and disturbed before simplistic views can give way to richer understanding of the complexity of teaching and learning. A teacher education candidate must learn how to enact a vision of good teaching, recognize and document the quality of student learning, and build productive relationships with students.
- Learning to teach requires courses that model and make explicit assumptions about exemplary teaching and productive learning. There is more to teaching than telling, and there is more to learning than listening. A preservice program must provide experiences of doing curriculum as well as talking about curriculum.
- Learning to teach requires a view of professional knowledge as created by systematic personal and collaborative inquiry, not a stable body of knowledge created by others. Learning to teach is enhanced when teacher candidates research their own practice and share their findings with their peers.
- A preservice program is more effective when teacher educators model in their own classrooms the teaching and learning approaches advocated by the program. Teacher candidates must be shown how to develop a metacognitive



stance that permits them to understand their own professional learning and to organize and use professional knowledge conceptually.

- Principles guiding a teacher education program are not taught once; they are revisited frequently as teacher candidates gain personal experience in education classrooms and in practicum placements.

What, then, is the potential role of field experiences in teacher education programs? Field experiences provide genuine opportunities to more fully understand the meaning of new perspectives introduced and encouraged in teacher education classrooms. While we generally use the phrase "practice teaching" to refer to the most common element of field experiences, that phrase can be incredibly misleading if it refers only to the notion of taking what has been learned in education courses and practicing it in schools or to the notion of observing one's associate teacher's practices prior to attempting them personally. Field experiences serve many other purposes that are central to learning to teach, yet we rarely see them listed. To illustrate possibilities, we suggest the following:

- Are field experiences about survival, rigour, and endurance, or are they about learning how to learn from field experiences or does learning how to learn about field experiences require survival, rigour, and endurance?
- Are field experiences about enacting what candidates have only been told about promising practices or are they about learning what it means to think pedagogically about learning in classrooms?
- How do teacher educators genuinely prepare candidates for field experiences, and how do we come to know what they really learned from those experiences?
- What messages about their future pedagogy do teacher candidates take from the way in which they learn during the practicum? Do teacher candidates, in fact, know how they take away these messages? Have we as teacher educators recognized that sending students to schools for weeks at a time is itself a pedagogical strategy?

The program in which we teach provides candidates with three 4-week practice teaching opportunities. For many years we have conducted sets of focus groups with elementary and secondary preservice candidates to try to understand more fully the quality of their practicum experiences and they have often told us that they quickly tire of being "debriefed" about those experiences. It is not enough for each teacher educator to individually inquire into the nature and quality of their learning from field experiences. Discussions that begin at the same level from one course to another understandably become tedious and tiresome. If we see the development of reflective practitioners as one of our major goals, then we must build on candidates' field experiences to help them recognize and understand the authority of their experiences (Munby & Russell, 1994) and promote their metacognitive understanding. Genuine reframing of perspectives on pedagogy occurs primarily in the instances of genuine puzzlement, uncertainty, and surprise (or reflection-in-action, Schön, 1983) that occurred during field experiences. Documenting, analyzing, interpreting and interrogating instances of

reflection-in-action are processes at the very core of a teacher educator's responsibilities for developing the potential role of field experience.

One of Schön's later contributions involved taking what he termed a *reflective turn* (1991, p. 5) and we believe that teacher educators must take a reflective turn if they are to develop more fully the potential role of field experience in teacher education. Schön sees the reflective turn involving giving practitioners reason: "Assume that there is an underlying *sense* to be discovered" in a practitioner's actions and then work to discover that underlying sense: "what practitioners already know or how they already learn in the context of their own practice" (p. 5). When one "wants to help practitioners acquire a new set of skills or insights . . . his or her primary concern is to discover and help practitioners discover what they already understand and know how to do" (p. 5).

These ideas relate in important ways to the ideas already presented. We see traditional teacher education practices rooted in telling rather than in listening and modeling. "We know how to teach, and teacher candidates need to learn, from us and from associate teachers" could be one way to summarize traditional thinking. What we tell candidates is what they assume we want them to practice in their field experiences. During field experiences, the mentor tells the candidate the ways in which he or she should practice differently. Where is the attention to what the candidate already knows, particularly from the long and influential apprenticeship of observation? Taking a reflective turn is the move required to acknowledge that the beginning teacher already knows a great deal, even if she or he cannot tell us that knowledge. The only way to identify that knowledge is to let candidates begin to practice and then listen to what they do and to how they learn from what they do. From their actions, we can begin to identify the patterns in their thinking. Then we can work to find ways to interact with their thinking and to help them to develop it. Modeling the analysis of teaching-learning sequences in our teacher education classrooms would be one powerful step forward; teacher candidates could then attempt similar analysis in their practicum classrooms. Fostering metacognition by teacher candidates would be another powerful step forward, for it is crucial that future teachers learn to understand what and how they are learning from their practicum experiences.

### **What Purposes Underlie the Perspectives We Advocate Here?**

The pedagogy of teacher educators must engage learning from field experiences fully and productively. It is not enough to assign candidates to schools for practicum experiences and pretend that this constitutes a school-university partnership. It is not enough to welcome candidates back from schools, share a few practicum anecdotes and then move on to cover more of our own curriculum. Do teacher educators not have a professional obligation to help candidates interrogate their practicum experiences from the perspectives of the course they are teaching? Do teacher educators not have a pedagogical obligation to adapt post-practicum teaching to the experiences that candidates report? Do we help candidates develop their skills of learning from first-hand experience? If we do not accept such obligations and challenges, then we are helping to prove Zeichner and Tabachnick's (1981) point that there are few, if any, effects of university teacher education that could be washed out by school experience. We find it unproductive to set school and university in competition for candidates' attention. While we all know that partnerships between school and university would be ideal, we often fail to

recognize the extent to which neither school nor university understands how difficult it is for the other to change (Sarason, 1971, 1996). We find it more challenging and more productive to see the responsibility of the university as that of guiding candidates in the process of interpreting and reframing their practicum experiences as they develop greater personal insight into the complexities of teaching, learning and the enactment of teaching practices that foster productive student learning.

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# Chapter 16

## *Landscape of Experience: Does It Have a Place in Teacher Education Programs?*

PHILIPPE MAUBANT and LUCIE ROGER

*This research was conducted at the Université de Sherbrooke for the purpose of describing and understanding how elementary school teachers in Quebec perceive and implement their teaching practices. This research, which began in 2006, uses a mixed methodology. Results from a category-specific analysis rendering real life accounts as well as a lexical analysis tend to establish the traceability of professional knowledge displayed in teachers' practices. This mixed methodology makes differentiating between collective professional knowledge and individual professional knowledge possible, and, therefore, allows for reaching an understanding about their foundations. It is clear from this research that the knowledge derived from the landscape of experience occupies a considerable place when defining teaching practices. First, this chapter will present these different types of knowledge; then, it will outline how the landscape of experience can be taken into account in teacher education programs.*

### Introduction

Educational projects, which first and foremost aim to prepare future citizens for the society of tomorrow, must indeed be able to rely on competent professionals. Consequently, improving the quality of teacher education programs becomes essential. Underneath this orientation lies a postulate shared today by both researchers (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991) and politicians (American Council on Education, 1999), which asserts the teacher's role as a significant vehicle for improving academic performances of pupils. Furthermore, the success of an educational reform seems to depend strongly on the involvement and conviction of the people concerned, namely teachers. In other words, "several publications (Anderson & Helms, 2001; Mendro, 1998; Powell & Anderson, 2002) have underlined the major role of teachers within the framework of a successful introduction of a new curriculum" (Lenoir, 2005). From this viewpoint, certain educational policies (Allègre & Meirieu, 1999), relying on recommendations from researchers (Perrenoud, 2001), attempted to prompt teachers to commit to continuous training in order to develop their own stance as a research practitioner. Thus, the research-action model was singled out as a relevant training model because it seeks to compare the analysis of the educational situation with the knowledge supplied mainly by educational research. The research-action model enables one to better connect the knowledge derived from practices with the knowledge about practices. This manifested interest for this type of

training model is a reminder of how the quality of teacher education programs depends on the notion of connection between different types of knowledge at play within educational intervention. It would seem that the different measures for teacher education programs, both in Europe and in North America, are having difficulty in establishing this essential synergy between the various types of knowledge necessary to teaching.

### **Presentation of the Research**

The intrinsic purpose of this research is to inquire into the scientific knowledge (deriving from the educational sciences) of elementary school teachers in Quebec that comes into play in their notions of educational practices. We are attempting to better understand the synergies that take place between the various types of knowledge at play within educational practices. Few articles have addressed the question of educational practices from the point of view of organizing principles in educational intervention. Bressoux (2001) has greatly contributed to this promising research. To have an effect on teacher education measures, it seems essential to be aware of the logics of action that preside over the implementation of the teaching act. Through this knowledge, we wish to offer leads to a significant development of teacher education programs in terms of their content (suggested knowledge) as well as the pedagogical modalities that are favoured in vocational teacher education programs (especially the problem of theory-practice alternation). As for the originality of the project, in light of the analyses of existing articles (Bressoux, 2001; Bru & Lenoir, 2006; Vanhulle & Lenoir, 2005), educational practices have mainly been questioned and studied until now according to two paradigms: notions of education and knowledge in regard to practice. This research aims at updating the scientific knowledge deriving from the educational sciences by displaying the connections between the knowledge approved by the faculties of education and/or departments of the educational sciences, the knowledge of practices (knowledge imparted by teachers), and real life practices. If we wish to facilitate the development of teacher education programs, it would be advisable, as suggested by Gauthier & Mellouki (2006), to establish a teaching knowledge base according to the analysis of the work of teachers (Lenoir, 2005).

Thus, this research aims at identifying the foundations of organizing and contributory knowledge of educational practices of elementary school teachers in Quebec. It is consistent with the major problems raised by the Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sports of Quebec (MELS), especially regarding perseverance and academic success. Since “*Les États Généraux de l’Éducation*” (Gouvernement du Québec, 1996), the importance of quality teaching has been recognized in Quebec as a determining factor concerning perseverance and academic success. To achieve this objective, this descriptive, exploratory, and collaborative research aims at:

1. identifying, together with teachers, the scientific knowledge deriving from the educational sciences that contributes to the implementation of teaching practices;
2. identifying one or several underlying educational models of intervention;
3. examining underlying transfer mechanisms between the desired and displayed knowledge and the notion of educational practices;

4. updating the impact of contributory scientific knowledge in teaching-learning situations as suggested by novice teachers in teacher training in regard to concepts of teaching practices.

However, in identifying the knowledge that contributes to the implementation of educational practices, the landscape of experience seems to occupy a prominent place for the majority of teachers interviewed. But which types of experiences are considered significant by teachers, and would it be possible to consider these experiential references within teacher education programs?

### Theoretical Framework

School contexts seem to weakly support the construction of new in-service teachers' professional identity (Martineau, 2008). The university, thus, has to assure the implementation of the professionalization process in which the construction of the professional identity constitutes one of the purposes. Through the creation of teaching-learning situations, universities try to create perfect conditions for successful professional learning that aims at the development of the twelve professional competencies established by the Quebec teachers' training curriculum. Our research tries to specifically identify this act to learn a vocation within the teaching-training situations present in teacher education programs.

We choose to adopt the framework of the "didactique professionnelle" to study the professional learning in teacher education programs, because the representation of the concept of a situation in this framework appears to be the most relevant for our research. This specific framework is particularly interesting through the professional learning within other fields than the field of teacher training. Moreover, "situation" is a central concept in the "didactique professionnelle": It is present as the space-time that allows for the establishment of links to make some sense between the various knowledge types called upon and their potential in action. The model proposed by the "didactique professionnelle" asks to: 1) observe a professional during his or her practice; 2) to invite him or her to think about the practice he or she engages in; 3) to allow him or her to identify and to analyze the professional knowledge which underlies his or her practice in order to modify it. This is, however, hardly the case for teacher training, particularly within teacher education programs.

Indeed, several obstacles make this a delicate and complex approach. First, it is difficult to identify the product stemming from professional action. What is the noticeable product of the act of teaching? Then, as the education is taking place at the university, pre-service teachers are not yet in on-going real-teaching situations. They build and develop professional knowledge, but defer its implementation. They cannot discuss their knowledge, much less adjust it. Although Pastré (2004, p. 23) stated the existence of an abstract structure of a situation as a "noyau conceptuel qu'il faut prendre en compte pour que l'action soit pertinente et efficace,"<sup>1</sup> this structure seems imperceptible, and it is impossible to identify situations of professional learning within teaching-learning situations encountered by the pre-service teachers. Choosing to work from what the various players say, we invited the pre-service

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<sup>1</sup> a "conceptual core that must be taken into account to ensure relevant and effective action" (our translation)

teachers to reconstitute the narrative of their learning to read and understand the act of professional learning that they draw upon in their conception, implementation, and evaluation of their personal act of learning. Through the study of professional learning situations, we also tried to understand the process of constructing the act to learn a vocation and to develop the process of reflexive thought for pre-service teachers. The method proposed by “la didactique professionnelle” to analyze cognitive activity appears to be an interesting one, as it allows for understanding the cognitive activity of the subject through feedback on his or her action. However, in “didactique professionnelle” the analysis of the activity takes place generally after the action and is based on the action which was observed. The situations within teacher education programs still do not present observable forms of action. We formulate the hypothesis that the real teaching situations are not the only significant situations in teacher education programs for developing professional learning. It does not seem useful to observe the pre-service teacher attending a theoretical course. But it is necessary to target exactly the formative activities which particularly seem to shape the development of professional learning.

### **Methodological Framework**

The research was carried out from a quadruple perspective: interactive, collaborative, descriptive, and exploratory. The research was interactive in so far as it highlights the interactions between the various types of knowledge at play in educational intervention. Our ability to define teachers’ professional knowledge rests upon our identifying these various types of knowledge (Pastré, 2002). The research was collaborative in so far as it brings teachers together (Lenoir, 1996). This type of research brings teachers together inasmuch as the renewing of the basis of educational intervention is attempted by listening to and analyzing the statements of teachers, as well as directly observing their teaching practices. It was descriptive research in so far as we wish to describe the professional knowledge at play in the act of teaching. Finally, the research was an exploratory approach (De Ketele & Roegiers, 1991) as our project aims to model the structure of what justifies the choice of a particular type of educational intervention by the teacher.

#### ***The Sample***

First, nine in-service teachers with more than five years of experience were grouped: The objective here was to take into account a “set learning period” between the end of the four-year teacher education program and the first years of employment. Then, a second group of ten pre-service teachers (pre-school and elementary program) from the Université de Sherbrooke was formed. We will focus, for this paper, exclusively on the data that has been collected and analyzed from the interviews conducted with the in-service teachers.

#### ***Procedures to Collect the Data***

We referred to the methodological steps presented by De Ketele and Roegiers (1991), i.e. semi-structured individual interviews to begin with, semi-structured individual interviews concerned with planning, and semi-structured individual interviews concerned with feedback. Direct observations were made based on audio recordings. We set up focus groups and circulated



questionnaires. Resorting to mixed methods (Lenoir, Maubant, Larose, Hassani, & Routhier, 2005) is essential when attempting to identify the action itself, but also what generates the structure of the action. In addition to these various interviews and observations, we made a documentary analysis of the current teacher education programs in Quebecois universities, in the hope of highlighting the logics and the main contents of scientific knowledge that presided over the implementation of these curricula in each of these universities. Our data collection relied on the connection between our notion of teaching practices (Altet, Paquay, Perrenoud, 2002; Lenoir, 2005) and the data collection to enable us to understand all of the constituent stages of this practice, from its development to its evaluation.

The focus groups and initial interviews allowed us to highlight the values that appear to be transversal within discourse on educational practice and on the knowledge called upon and mobilized in this practice. Starting from the various stages of the comprehensive description of the practice (pre-active stage, interactive stage, and post-active stage), we questioned the teachers about the following three stages of their practice:

- **pre-active stage:** interview about the choice of the subject and the reason for this choice of a teaching-learning situation put forward for the observation, the identification of the knowledge imparted to pupils, the methods adopted to disseminate the knowledge (material, activities, reason for the choice, nature of the activity, frequency of this type of activity, planned instrumental measures, didactic facilitators, perceptions of the difficulties tied to the imparted knowledge, perceptions of the didactic difficulties, perceptions of the pupils' learning difficulties);
- **inter-active stage:** observation of in-service teacher, description of the class, configuration of the class (photographs), observation of the context, types of teacher-pupil interactions, types of questions asked, models or types of management of the class (e.g. teamwork), educational facilitators, perceptions of the difficulties connected to the behaviour and learning difficulties, development of professional gestures corresponding to the diagnosis of the difficulties;
- **post-active stage:** feedback on the session, identification of the different constituent dimensions of teaching practices, teachers' self-evaluation (general satisfaction, limits in terms of didactic and educational objectives, overall impressions, explanatory factors concerning feelings about success, difficulties or even failures, strategies to remedy the difficulties listed, analysis of the projection stage in future teaching-learning sequences).

By studying these three stages, we attempted to discover the relationship between teachers and education, their relationship to the profession, and their relationship to teaching practices. The mobilization of several tools in terms of the data collection (focus groups, initial interviews, interviews concerned with planning, observations, and interviews concerned with feedback) provided the researcher with various modalities allowing for defining teaching practices. We continued to take into account the close connections between various reference systems displayed and representations of teaching practices. By observing in-service teachers, we attempted to underline the connections between elements of professional actions and

statements about these actions. In this way, our research aimed to establish elements of coherence between the systems of knowledge displayed by the teacher (lexical analysis) and his/her updated representations of the practice based on case studies. Furthermore, in our research, we relied on a category-specific analysis.

### ***Procedures to Process the Data***

“The science needs order: Hence the temptation to conceal the disorder and to organize the documents into a hierarchy by discarding all which would include ambiguity and uncertainty. This historically necessary operation consists in producing a clear and relevant analysis of the past. It relies, if possible, on producing documentary evidence and often leads to the production of blind interpretations and to a form of blindness more or less accepted by the one who raises these interpretations” (Chalmel, 2007, p. 195, our translation). To avoid this risk of blindness, we chose to mix the methods of data gathering with the methods of data processing to take into account the paradigm of complexity stated previously. Three types of data processing and analysis were used: 1) lexical analyses (by keywords) to identify and define the various reference systems put forward by teachers that could have an influence on the organization of the knowledge displayed in teaching practices; 2) case studies that aim to connect life narratives with those of practice as the objective here is to emphasize the connections between the representation of the profession, the representation of what contributes to developing professional competence, and the representation of the practice and contributory knowledge; 3) a category-specific analysis to account for the presence of these various systems.

### ***The Category-Specific Analysis***

We have also displayed the method of conceptualizing categories in order to support this research about connections, even coherences between systems of references and/or teachers' influences that represent systems of knowledge and statements about teaching practices (Paillé, 2005). For this category-specific analysis, we chose to situate the following: the education and teaching purposes as perceived by the teachers that were interviewed; their conceptions of the profession and of everything that competes with or contributes to the professionalization process (conception of the good teacher, glimpse at the initial university education, continuous training, reference to teaching model); pedagogical models that teachers seek in their practice. This category-specific analysis allowed us to verify the relevance of the reference systems identified in the lexical analysis. It also allows for situating the importance of a given reference system with regard to others. The category-specific analysis compared to the lexical analysis provided us with more attributes, and thus enabled us better to name the reference systems mentioned by teachers in order to conceive and implement their teaching practices. It also allowed for updating the explanatory elements pertaining to these reference systems.

Nevertheless, with reference to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003), who encourage us to make a distinction between mixed methods design, mixed models design, multimethods design, and multiple methods design, we can consider our research as being in line with mixed methods. While continuing to compare qualitative methods with quantitative methods, both American authors go beyond Johnson and Onwuegbuzie's (2004) approach. Our research used also the multimethods design type, because it involves various data collecting and analysis

procedures. We may also consider that the triangulation procedure is both an activity of cumulative validation produced by several researchers on the same data and an additional combination of various proposed theories on the gathered data, which would justify a post-mortem of the mixed methodology used in this research. However, Teddlie and Tashakkori do not define nor resort to the triangulation concept. It must be made clear that this research framed the triangulation concept as developed by Erzberger and Kelle (2003), that is “the search for further empirical data using another research evidence . . . Competition now convergence of empirical results is regarded as an indicator for their validity and strengthens the initial assumptions and the theoretical framework that was used to structure the research process” (pp.467-468). If triangulation consists of combining and comparing several given sources for data collecting, data processing, and analysis, then this research framed the triangulation concept and identifies with the multimethods design.

## A Few Results

### *Documentary Analysis*

This review draws on course descriptions of 400 courses. All of them were classified according to an analysis grid. Secondly, we identified those professional learning situations where a link between the various forms of knowledge seems to have been furthered. So, each course was coded according to the dimensions of practical activities or activities of analysis which the course descriptions suggested:

- Practicum in real-teaching situation (61 courses)
- Practicum in simulation (4 courses)
- Analysis of theoretical models ( 37 courses)
- Analysis of pedagogical situations (22 courses)
- Reflexive analysis of personal practice (38 courses)
- Analysis of personal verbal communication (2 courses)
- Analysis of pedagogical material (13 courses)
- Analysis of one’s own development and training (22 courses)
- Analysis of pupils (5 courses)
- Theory about practice analysis (6 courses)

In light of this review, the courses susceptible to carry professional learning situations are the ones which show the following features: the presence of practical exercises, exercises of reflexive analysis on the practice, a time of analysis of educational theories or educational models, the analysis of educational situations, and the theory of the analysis of the practices. These elements seem to us particularly important in the development of professional learning because they allow for linking the theories, the practice, the analysis, as well as the methods to support pre-service teachers in their analytical approach to their professional action.

### *In-Service Teacher Interview Analysis*

Categories of foundations in terms of professional knowledge emerged from processing the data. Four categories have been established:

1. Innate knowledge
2. Theoretical knowledge deriving from teacher training
3. Knowledge deriving from peers
4. Landscape of experiential knowledge

In the following, we shall examine exclusively the experiential knowledge. The aforementioned approach to the analysis enables us to divide these types of knowledge into a landscape of experience:

<i>Landscape of Experience</i>	<i>Excerpts</i>
EXPERIENCE WITH CHILDREN BEFORE TEACHER TRAINING	<i>At first, I felt resourceless, perhaps even frightened. I was afraid of the unknown because I hadn't really known any children, never babysat, never...</i>
EXPERIENCE WITH PUPILS	<i>The teacher that I am results from the way I was as a student among other things. During elementary school and high school is when I moulded my character, moulded my personality as a teacher.</i>
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	<i>After teaching for several years, at some point you begin to change and you feel more at ease. I had the opportunity of teaching grade 2 for eight years.</i>
LIFE EXPERIENCE	<i>I began doing yoga because I had back problems. I became a yoga instructor. I showed my students how to breathe and I realized that it solved a great deal of problems. Often, students with difficulties had trouble breathing and so, at lunchtime, we had workshops in which we showed them how to breathe with books on their stomachs. They learned to relax and their marks improved.</i>
EXPERIENCE ACQUIRED FROM ENCOUNTERED DIFFICULTIES	<i>The first child who threw a tantrum made me feel powerless. I solicited advice and I asked questions. That first time, I reacted badly: I punished the child severely and the child became impossible to manage. Now, I inflict mild punishments and am capable of managing the child's behaviour.</i>
EXPERIENCE ACQUIRED FROM SUBSTITUTE TEACHING	<i>I always said that the best way to learn is with occasional substitute teaching. You immerse yourself and learn different ways of doing things. You become the teacher and feel the dynamics of the class, you learn to manage it, you find tricks, you use lots of teaching material and borrow some too.</i>

## Discussion

To understand how these fields of experience may be useful in teacher training, we shall refer to Bachelard (1938). A scientist and a philosopher, Bachelard believes that training is fundamental (Fabre, 2001, p. 7). In *La formation de l'esprit scientifique* (1938), Bachelard suggests that the production of new knowledge takes place when overcoming epistemological breaks. These obstacles lie in the culture and knowledge already acquired by each individual. They cause a mental block and bring satisfactory answers that prevent the individual from looking beyond and understanding the real world in some other way. Concerning the teaching profession especially, Bachelard mentions that teachers must question “their own relation to knowledge and their representation of their discipline; they must also analyze their fantasies, which inevitably influence their desire to teach” (Fabre, 2001, p. 42, our translation).

This idea of overcoming the obstacle of an epistemological break is not necessarily central to a teacher education program as the documentary analysis suggests. If we take a few of the obstacles presented by Bachelard and attempt to associate them with the approach to teacher training, we realize that the current measures do not allow for these breaks that are essential to the training of a scientific mind. The first obstacle is precisely that of first-hand experience. This obstacle considers experience as being real without seeking to understand the causes or the actual meaning of the problem. For example, the reflexive analysis suggested after training periods is presented as a strategy used by the supervisor to allow the student to make connections. If this analysis is made spontaneously by the student and it concerns exclusively the action taken during the training period in the midst of problematic situations without trying to understand the actual causes of these situations, the future teacher faces an epistemological obstacle.

The diverse landscape of experience that we have documented in this research could not all be used in a teacher education program, such as the programs designed and implemented in Quebec. The acquired experience in teaching and the acquired experience in substitute teaching have not yet been provided for pre-service teachers. However, the other fields of experience are sometimes addressed during the training in teacher education programs, sometimes outside of that training. It becomes necessary not only to turn to the landscape of experience, but also to help pre-service teachers in their reflexive approach within the landscape of experiences. We must allow them to associate their experiences with the theories and to get them to better understand these experiences and to be conscious of their experiential background when they become teachers.

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# Chapter 17

## **<Alter>ing Experiences in the Field: Next Practices**

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*Field experiences are and have been an integral part of teacher education programming in Canada. Yet their goals and purposes are subject to a wide array of competing beliefs and interests among a range of different discursive communities. This paper sets out to explore the question “What should be the role of field experiences in teacher education programmes?” It begins by documenting contemporary educational scholarship about the transformative potential of place based learning while situating it within a complex sociopolitical environment. It then documents early efforts at implementing the Alternative Practicum, a programmatic response to the shoulds of teacher education at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. Some examples of how such community based placements have altered preservice teachers’ beliefs and developed their capacity as critically conscious, civically and ethically engaged teacher leaders are provided to illustrate the enabling and constraining features of such programmatic efforts. Finally the paper sets out emerging questions that will drive subsequent research efforts.*

This paper offers an exploration of the question “*What should be the role of field experiences in teacher education programmes?*” Such a question seems very broad in an initial reading: its open framework invites imaginative and possibly creative responses in which a range of options might be considered, discussed, and analyzed for their potential. In that sense, this chapter offers considerable scope for potential inquiry.

However the question of “should” also invites some discussion of means and ends; that is, the *should* of teacher education fieldwork depends, in large part, on the “ends” of teacher education. In other words, what one should do is always situated within a framework of seeing/knowing/understanding the educational enterprise as having particular purposes or outcomes. So how one understands the role of teachers in society, knowledge of and processes of learning, as well as how such knowledge is best conveyed, presented or taken up, all form parts of an essential context in which the should of field experiences in teacher education are taken up and implicated. This point was made most cogently in Falkenberg’s (2008) discussion of teacher education purposes, particularly in the suggestion that we need to make explicit “our own – and where applicable – our programme’s assumptions about the purpose of teacher education” (p. 37).

The should of teacher education field experience is also shaped by the conditions and demands of contemporary teaching: as teacher educators we seek to provide the best preparation for our incoming student teacher learners, and develop programmes that fit the diverse and complex contexts of contemporary learning environments. Therefore

consideration of how several key scholars – among them Britzman (2003), Darling Hammond and Bransford (2006), Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kaplan (2008), Hafner (2006), Phelan and Sumsion (2008), and Zeichner (1996) – have set out the challenges of teacher education will also be briefly considered as context for this paper.

The final sections of the paper will then consider how the University of Victoria, through a recently awarded SSHRC research grant, has been attempting to realign its teacher education programme through the design and implementation of a new form of field experience, programmatically described as an “Alternative Practicum”. The paper will offer an exploration of how the University of Victoria understands the “shoulds” of this modified field experience component, and goes on to examine what kinds of structures, supports and programmatic elements need to accompany such field experiences. Some preliminary data collected from teachers who have participated in the Alternative Practicum is then offered as evidence of the transformative potential of place based learning in alternative settings and its potential in creating civically and ethically committed teacher leaders. Finally, the paper concludes with some questions to guide future research directions.

### **Seeking Congruency: Matching Field Experience and Teacher Education Paradigms**

While an exploration of the purposes of teacher education might be considered too large a task for this paper, thankfully other teacher educator scholars have turned their minds to these questions and offer typologies that can inform how to approach such a task. In particular, we will draw upon Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler’s (2008) conceptions or frames of teaching to consider how we might consider the match (or mis-match) between programme purposes and field experiences.

Davis, Sumatra and Luce-Kapler (2008) argue that a genealogical analysis of western conceptions of education and theories of learning allow us to trace how these beliefs have produced particular conceptions of teaching. They present two general categories of learning theory: correspondence and coherence theory. Correspondence theories share a belief in knowledge as an external reality/truth that can be either discovered, traced, acquired or reproduced. From a teacher education perspective, correspondence theories of learning have produced at least two dominant ways of conceptualizing learning about teaching: the rationalist and empirical approaches. The rationalist model is of particular interest to this paper’s discussion of field experience given its emphasis on logical constructions of knowledge and how it favours developmentally focused and incrementally organized *experiences* that move on a linear continuum from simple to complex. This understanding of experience emphasizes the study of an external reality that is then reinforced and practiced, usually characterized by conditioning or training regimes that are “practitioner-proof” (Dunne & Pendllbury, 2002, p. 197 as cited in Phelan & Sumsion, 2008, p. 26).

Coherence theories are characterized by contrasting beliefs about knowledge as evolving, multiple, socially contingent and complex. Such beliefs also challenge any contention that the world can be fully known. Two ways of conceptualizing learning that flow from these beliefs include interpretivist and participatory approaches. The interpretivist approach emphasizes sense making and argues that learning is not an outcome of teaching but rather a process of

enabling learning. Constructivism and constructionism are both learning models that are represented in this category. Participatory approaches reconceptualize the typical conception of teacher as knowledge holder/expert by suggesting that learning and teaching are natural activities among people in multiple and diverse social settings. A participatory approach also views knowledge as complex and diverse, and thinks about how knowledges are emergent through social and cultural practices. Teaching in this theoretical frame now moves from directing pre-service teachers to see/understand teaching practices in anticipated or normalized ways to triggering or nudging learning in unanticipated ways. “The emphasis is not on *what is*, but *what might be* brought forth” (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008, p. 172, italics in original).

Identifying such binaries is theoretically useful in the sense that it helps teacher educators understand the ways in which competing discourses and educational practices mediate and shape teacher education programme design features, such as the field experience. Such differing perspectives are also represented in programme content – there is a messy mixture of these different orientations that creates a complex and even contradictory field of theories that preservice teachers are expected to draw upon as foundational to their practices and pedagogical beliefs. However as Britzman (2003) has suggested, it also offers an opportunity or space from which to examine how these programmatic tensions can be used to critically examine normalization processes, particularly those that impact the nature and purposes of field experiences promoted within teacher education programmes. Evidence of these tensions will be explored later in this paper.

### **Means and Ends: The Purposes of Teacher Education Programmes**

Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) open their study on teacher education programmes with an overview of contemporary demands on teachers and educational systems, arguing for “a new kind of preparation – one that enables them [teachers] to go beyond “covering the curriculum” to actually enable learning for students who learn in very different ways” (p. 2). While they place significant emphasis on the knowledge of teachers in understanding student development, theories of learning, and effective pedagogical practices, they also highlight the need for *professional commitments* to inclusionary practices and the need to advance their capabilities in multiple settings (p. 4). Such professional commitments are framed around the idea of responsibility for preparing students for equitable, democratic participation in society. Hafner (2006) also notes how this commitment to inclusion and equity – socially just educational practices – has been significantly advanced in the field of teacher education. A more recent discourse – that of teacher and school *leadership* for social justice – has also been promoted as a primary means through which such professional commitments may be realized. Lieberman and Miller (2004) trace the development of teacher leadership in response to the polarities of policy prescription and transformational practice, arguing that the notion of leadership offers a means through which to realize the latter.

Our goal at the University of Victoria has been to take up the challenges of preparing students for roles as socially just, professional teacher leaders. However, rather than prescribing leadership as the “answer” for enabling socially-just school reforms, a more nuanced understanding of the social, cultural, political and racially situated qualities of

leadership is envisioned. By this we mean exploring the socio-cultural situatedness of leadership beliefs and practices; arguing for a *critically conscious* model in which beliefs and privilege are consistently and persistently questioned. For teacher educators, enhancing the development of such critically reflective practices therefore becomes central to programme design; at the University of Victoria we have approached this goal by conceiving of preparing teachers for their dual role as *citizenship educators* and *civic leaders*.

While there are a variety of ways in which such learning and approaches to leadership can be advanced, we see one primary means by which this learning can be enabled: community based field experiences. Called The Alternative Practicum, we offer our third year elementary teacher education students a three-week field experience in non-school sites.

The specifics of our approach will be described more fully in later sections of this paper as will the theoretical and pedagogical goals we hope to achieve. However before doing so, it is important to identify, at least briefly, the policy environment in Canadian teacher education as a political context through which field experience design has been manifested. Exploring these contexts helps illuminate the tensions and opportunities for programme re-design in preservice teacher education programmes and for field experiences in particular.

### **Policy Antecedents: The Discourses of Contemporary Teacher Education Programmes**

Readers of this paper will be familiar with the policy environment of education in Canada as one primarily determined by provincial jurisdiction. Yet this jurisdictional question is situated within the complex dynamics of social and political discourses. For example, there have been serious efforts to standardize educational outcomes for students across Canada, through initiatives such as the Canadian Council of Ministers of Education. Similarly inter-provincial agreements such as the *Agreement on Internal Trade* (AIT, 2008) have set out to standardize professional qualifications across Canada. As Grimmett (2009) notes, such agreements have had the effect of undermining the professional responsibilities of universities and interfering with self-governance by professions. In British Columbia and Alberta this desire for standardization has been affected through a recently negotiated Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) that is characterized as “harmonizing” teacher certification processes. These policy decisions have significant implications for universities and teacher education programming, as is evidenced by the University of Victoria’s decision to downscale its elementary teacher education programme from a five to a four year programme so as to “compete” with teacher preparation programmes in Alberta. Policy decisions such as these can be characterized as ideological and the product of particular governments or national contexts. But this too would be too simplistic a characterization: global policy discourses effect policy measures and as such shape teacher education programming decisions. Discourses rooted in Neoliberalism – such as the knowledge economy, global competitiveness, accountability and standardization – are also important constraints that have shaped university and programmatic responses to teacher education designs at the provincial level.

Conceptions of the knowledge worker and new capitalism (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996) have permeated policy documents at the post-secondary level. As well, Neoliberal

discourses that favour privatization, deregulation, and standardization have dominated Canadian political debates for the past two decades and have become

common sense and inevitable. Hence, neoliberal thought has been able to extend its hegemonic socio-economic research into the public sphere to redefine roles and responsibilities in education, healthcare, and social welfare in terms of their economic utility. (Fitzsimmons, 2000; Davies & Bansel, 2007, as cited in Grimmett, 2009, p. 6)

In this way the primary purposes of schooling, identified by Goodlad (1984) as encompassing academic, vocational, social, civic and personal development, have been constrained in ways that frequently prioritize vocational and academic goals over social and civic outcomes. These discourses/texts become authoritative in their use as Bakhtin (1981/1994) discussed; that is, their legitimacy emerges through the authority-power nexus that draws upon these particular discourses within political and policy environments, as well as their continued circulation and recirculation in multiple discursive communities. Such discourses become “indissolubly fused with its authority-political power, an institution, a person” (p. 78). As a result, these particular discourses become regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980) that are then normalized in our programmatic practices and can be implicated in the internally persuasive discourses (Bakhtin, 1981/1994) that are taken up and enacted by pre-service teachers and faculty alike in their conceptions about the purposes of field practice.

Discourses also operate historically; as Britzman (2003) noted, there are three central myths of teacher education programmes that have become sedimented into teacher education practices. Of significance to this discussion is how preservice teachers are self-made largely through practical experience (p. 55). Experience is interpreted through this historically produced discourse, and actively contradicts the idea that teacher education programmes are necessary to the work of becoming a teacher. In one way such a view privileges the practical field experience, providing an opportunity to shape preservice teachers approaches to teaching and pedagogical development, although as noted, beliefs about theory and practice and the taking up of global discourses of schoolings’ purposes simultaneously constrains this potential.

In summary, there are important contextual and discursive constraints on programme design and delivery; these constraints operate simultaneously to shape how institutions respond to multiple demands and are taken up by people, communities and organizations often in divergent ways. The design and delivery of field experiences are situated within this sociopolitical complex environment. It is to this particular practice that this paper now turns.

### **The Enabling and Constraining Features of Field Placements**

Field placements offer many possible opportunities for teacher learning. As outlined earlier, we conceptualize learning as a process of sense or meaning making, and implicitly as a process of co-adaptation through interactions with social structures, agents and objects, consistent with the coherence model outlined earlier. Interpreted in this way, the field experience offers a space in which to trouble the idea that learning to teach is a product of self-determination and initiation or one that simply reifies status quo practices.

The goal of the field placement is to assist the preservice teacher in learning about and engaging in the practices of teaching activity, and, as we have stated previously, to adopt professional commitments to his/her role as civic educators and leaders. Yet if preservice teachers' conceptions of the field experience are that its purpose is to model/mimic or take up specific styles of teaching (a mechanistic and instrumental view of teacher practice) in an apprentice-like fashion, then its potential as a site for critical inquiry is more limited in scope. Much teacher belief research backs this latter claim, as pre-existing beliefs become a type of heuristic through which to measure and judge what is "good" teaching practice (Britzman, 2003; Hodges, 1998; Kagan, 1992; Munby, Russell & Martin, 2001; Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998). Dennis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler's (2008) notion of semantic learning also illuminates the ways in which experience is recalled and measured: semantic knowledge emerges from narratives of experience and become cognitive tools that essentially privilege particular memories about the teaching/learning process. In this way semantic memories of experience can constrain what is understood as "good" or "preferred" teaching practices. We suggest it serves as a way of reinforcing already rehearsed or known teaching and learning strategies rather than considering how problematic moments or events might be interpreted as opportunities to re-imagine the act of teaching and learning. Clearly field experience, in this reading, is a constraining event.

The discussion of beliefs about learning and their relationship to models of teaching is necessarily brief given the limitations of this paper. However, they offer us a window into thinking about how field experience might be understood as a disruptive rather than normalizing strategy for learning about the processes of teaching.

How might the field experience enable richer, more diverse opportunities for learning? Field, (2007) described the importance of *inquiry* as central to this experience, and described this approach as a way of introducing teacher educators to the "perplexity and mystery" (p. 80) of classroom teaching. He goes on to suggest that the outcome should be comprised of a "meaningful experience and a kind of knowledge, tentatively held" (p. 80).

Similarly Zeichner (1996) has argued for broadening the ways in which field experiences are structured and planned. In particular, he calls for moving beyond individual classroom-only placements to address the larger role complexity of teacher work in schools and in the community, and to become more familiar with the diversity of student backgrounds. Such practices also interrupt what Goodlad (1990, as cited in Burant & Kirby, 2002) has called "deficiency scripts" about urban children; by this he means how many preservice teachers invoke "folk theories" about the deficits urban children have based on their social, emotional and intellectual capacities, as well as their socio economic status and/or racial backgrounds.

Other scholars have used this idea of inquiry to explore the potential of field experience to learn to teach "against the grain" (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Simon, 1992). For example, Goodman and Fish (1997) report on how preservice teacher field placements in classrooms where teachers were engaged in instruction for social equity offered sites for deeper engagement into the complexity of teaching and learning, and the role that teachers can play as educational change agents. This is consistent with our call for the use of teacher leadership as a critically conscious practice through which such outcomes might be realized.

Solomon, Manoukian and Clarke (2007) drawing from Giroux's (2005) concept of border crossing, explore the ways in which community service learning might be used to re-conceptualize the field based experience for preservice teachers. Border crossing relies on experiencing the social, cultural and political realities of others outside of the privileged

mainstream culture of schools in order to “enhance the possibility that prospective teachers will make critical reflective links between classroom practices and the ethos and needs of the surrounding social and cultural milieu” (Giroux & McLaren, 1996, as cited by Solomon, Manoukian & Clarke, 2007, p. 73-74). In this way preservice teachers build empathetic, caring connections to the children and families they support and serve while developing insights into their own role as teacher leaders in sociopolitical transformative change; helping to deconstruct discourses of power and privilege that limit educational opportunity for youth and children (Giroux & McLaren, 1996, as referenced in Solomon, Manoukian & Clarke, 2007, p. 73-74).

Similarly community based learning has been advocated as “a powerful way to teach preservice teachers about other cultures... cultural-immersion experiences allow preservice teachers to view, experience, reflect upon, and change perspectives of how others respond to and make sense of their worlds” (Cooper, 2007, p. 247). She reports on an effort to carefully stage community experiences in order to challenge preservice teachers’ preconceived beliefs about students. An important outcome was altering conceptions of deficit-based thinking, and establishing asset-based understandings of how communities strengthen and enhance multiple literacies and learning.

Finally, Gruenewald (2003) develops the idea of criticality and engagement in what he calls a “critical pedagogy of place”. This perspective emphasizes “that experience has a geographical context [that] opens the way to admitting critical social and ecological concerns into one’s understanding of place, and the role of places in education” (p. 9). The situational nature of this perspective needs to be emphasized: what becomes important is the *authenticity* of context, in which the interactions between people, sites, objects and purposes permits deeper levels of inquiry and rich learning to emerge. Like the field placement, place-based learning offers the potential for the “real” or the “practical” while simultaneously re-inscribing learning and teaching as complex, socially, culturally, politically and spatially informed practices outside of the typical boundaries of the school walls. We think this disruption of the normative nature of the field based experience offers a potential means through which to engage in the critical inquiry necessary for deepened forms of preservice teacher learning.

### **Field Experiences: Inextricably Tied to Educational “Shoulds”**

As this discussion has illustrated, the ideas of educational purpose and field experience are inextricably linked. As such the scholars reviewed here situate their approaches to field experience in the *shoulds* of education. They emphasize democratic and inclusive forms of education and the deconstruction of privilege based in race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, and culture. They also emphasize the complexity of the teaching and learning experience, and look to how the field experience might be conceptualized and offered in ways that might assist preservice teachers in deepening their understandings of the socio-political contexts of education. Beyond this however, the concept of the teacher as advocate, leader, and civic and social change agent comes through. In other words, the field experience offers more than an apprenticeship into the profession but rather a means through which to take up the challenges of civic, social and political engagement as necessary literacies for teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is focused around criticality and ongoing inquiry as conditions for engagement and learning. Finally, it offers a view of professionally focused learning as being a practice immersed within

and part of a wider community of educational interest. In other words, it seeks to blur the boundaries between schools and communities; creating an understanding of education that moves beyond the classroom walls.

### **The University of Victoria Shoulds: Community, Civically informed and Participatory Educational Purposes.**

At the University of Victoria, we have recently launched changes to our field experience placements in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the elementary teacher education programme. Called the Alternative Practicum, we have offered to all elementary education students an opportunity, on a voluntary basis, to participate in a three-week practicum experience in a non-traditional site. This has encompassed a range of potential placement options for students including: community-based service and arts organizations, youth engagement or service oriented settings, alternative and private school sites, nature and outdoor recreational sites, hospitals, teacher education programmes, aboriginal organizations, international education placements and student day care camps.

We became interested in this approach to field experience as a result of our increasing concern with what we understood to be a narrowing of the teacher education programme's purposes on the one hand (as expressed by our students' often well articulated desire to teach in middle class, white neighbourhood schools like the ones they had grown up in); the lack of cultural, racial and gender diversity in our programme applicants (largely white, middle class women); the need to more fully integrate the socio-cultural complexity of urban teaching environments; and how the teacher education literature has been re-conceptualizing issues of teaching, learning, teacher identity development and complexity thinking on the other. In particular, our teacher education programme has been modified to address issues in special education, indigenous education, civic/social responsibility and teacher leadership while conceptualizing teacher education as less about *best practice* and more about *next practice*. By this we mean the ways in which a focus on learning – both in the programme itself, but also as an organizing feature of how teachers take up and live teacher-practice as ongoing inquiry and creative adaptation – offers the potential for emergent, innovative and culturally responsive teaching in multiple-sited learning spaces. Such an orientation encourages inquiry into one's own practice rather than simply taking up a mentor teachers' practice in the more typical apprenticeship style model of field experience.

In promoting this inquiry based approach, we have adopted the metaphor of thin membranes: we are looking for ways to blur boundaries, cross barriers, highlight ambiguity, complexity and inquiry, and enable cross-institutional practices in which new ideas, alternative forms of learning, and alternative teacher roles might emerge between the traditional spaces of preservice teacher learning (the university) and the many informal and non-formal learning spaces of community. This model also seeks to problematize notions of teacher-as-expert, learners as deficient, education as schooling, pedagogy as strategy, and more traditional ways of thinking about schooling and education as apart from the other spaces and places where learning happens. Our goal has been to look for ways of operationalizing a model that deconstructs the aforementioned assumptions by providing preservice teachers with experiences that offer alternative views about the purposes of education and illustrates the role



of teachers as socially just leaders. In the next section of this paper we describe our early efforts.

### *The Alternative Practicum Sites*

Our first steps in designing the field experience were to put together a series of possible community-based sites and find community partners who were willing to take our students for this three-week practicum. A key principle in our approach was to emphasize reciprocity: in exchange for taking one of our students for a three week placement, there would be significant organizational benefit. As we began to canvas organizations for their interest in participation, we focused in on how students might be tools to meet community organizational needs.

An early lesson taught us something about our own assumptions: we had to quickly modify the three-week placement norm we had used in organizing school practica. Given the different needs, calendars, and client-based service delivery models that characterized many of these community organizations, we had to become more flexible. For example, some organizations wanted a student 10 hours a week, and thus, a longer placement would be in order. Others wanted evening rather than daytime hours; some placements were completed in less than three weeks given the intensity of their programmes (such as field trips with multiple schools in an environmental center). So rather than requiring the five-day, three-week model, we re-designed the programme requirements to a total of 75 hours.

Another complication arose when we began to think about how students would be assessed in this practicum experience, as we did not want community organizations to feel overburdened with paper work. Even the nature of site visits by our university supervisors was considerably different. In a more typical practicum the supervisor observes a lesson; completes an evaluation rubric (that has been in use for considerable time), and experienced classroom teachers simply used their own experiences as a measure of how to assess student performance. In the community-based practicum, supervision became quite different, and required more of an inquiry approach to understanding the tasks, roles, and responsibilities a student might have taken on. For example, one of our students was placed with an organization called BeatBoard: the work project this student organized was a youth film festival that included poster production, contact with and networking between related youth organizations, a search for sponsorship, as well as working with the youth to talk about how their film work would be introduced. In another, a student learned the routines and gained the trust of a disabled youth by accompanying them on field trips and meeting family members. In still another, the student was charged with designing and delivering workshops on environmental science, and designed assessment instruments for measuring the performance of other educators' teaching and learning pedagogy. This diverse range of responsibilities went well beyond the scope of the "traditional" practicum supervision work and standard reporting procedures, and required a great deal of flexibility and openness on the part of the practicum supervisors; for some, this was a challenge. It also required students to reflect in different ways on what they were learning: this was a struggle for some of our students who wanted to try to parallel the priorities of classroom-based activities (such as lesson and unit planning) in order to feel they had "experienced" the necessary pre-requisite experiences to "move forward" to a longer, more demanding practicum.

The accompanying practicum seminar also needed modification: here, we introduced a series of group or partnered site visits as an introduction to thinking about the ways in which

learning was experienced differently on-site in the community. Ideas of informal rather than formal education had to be canvassed. We encouraged seminar leaders to help us design other kinds of seminar experiences meant to more deeply engage our students in thinking about how their conceptions of teaching and learning were constrained by their own belief systems and normalized conceptions of learning. In doing this, we introduced site visits to non-school sites for all of our students, regardless of whether they were considering participation in the Alternative Practicum, and guided our students to reflect on and question their assumptions about the places where learning happens.

We also introduced a new text: *Engaging Minds: Changing Teaching in Complex Times* (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2008), a challenging book that used complexity theory as its primary approach to thinking about children, teaching, learning. The text encouraged thinking about the tasks of teaching by exploring difficult questions related to how learning happens, and sought to challenge the more normative conceptions of methods based courses and linear programme design. We used the text as another tool through which to engage in practices of inquiry and to deconstruct students' sedimented beliefs and deficiency scripts. Students found the text challenging; in part, because it drew heavily upon theories of socioculturally situated teaching and learning that were unfamiliar, and many expressed concern about its relevance to their upcoming practicum experiences. This tension we attribute largely to the normalized discourses about the purposes of seminar as a place to "prepare for the practicum" and its concomitant focus on the practical, reminiscent of Britzman's (2003) discussion of the privileging of practice.

Debriefing after the practicum was also difficult given how we had formerly designed the seminar; we engaged in a lot of trial and error in the first year particularly until we started to see how we could create a structure and platform that matched the new ideas that had emerged from our initial thinking about this community-based experience. An important component of this involved talking with our students and the community members we had initially approached, to work with us in an advisory capacity. Part of this work emerged as a result of the SSHRC grant we received in the second year of our alternative practicum project. Our initial commitment to reciprocity as a principle of design and delivery made us believe that our research needed to use participatory design principles.

Commitment is one thing, reality another: these day-to-day expression of participatory principles did not always work out as we had expected, given the time and financial constraints of our community partners in particular. For example, we organized our meetings to accommodate work schedules (meeting in the late afternoon and providing food so people could relax and mingle a bit) but still assumed that everyone was comfortable coming to the university campus to meet with us. During our second community meeting we were reminded that there are many community sites that might work as well, and that we needed to stop privileging our own work commitments over those of others. As a result, our Knowledge Sharing Forum planned for the end of our first year of the research process used participatory principles that engaged our student participants, community members and researchers alike, and was hosted in a community center. It was during this session that the metaphor of "thin membranes" first emerged from this discussion as Nancy<sup>1</sup>, one of our community organization participants, made clear how community educational goals had to become more of a priority in our thinking and planning.

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<sup>1</sup> A pseudonym as are all names used in this paper.

Students also gave valuable comments about programme design features, and often questioned our assumptions about how things worked. They inspired us to collaboratively write a Reader's Theatre presentation for a Western Canadian Association of Student Teachers (WestCAST) conference, one that explored our own assumptions and how we were sometimes rudely awakened by the ways we privileged our own authority as programme designers. Perhaps most importantly, the students became the spokespersons for the Alternative Practicum experience and how it had altered or modified their beliefs as new teachers and learners. We were always deeply moved and often amazed by the articulate ways in which these students could make sense of their learning, and how intensely reflective they were. As a result, in the fall of 2009 we asked these students to take on the role of orienting other students to the Alternative Practicum: their rich knowledge and experience spoke volumes about the effectiveness of the programme and its transformative potential. They actively led all of the sessions, each time provoking their student peers to think more deeply about their assumptions, beliefs and understandings about the purpose of practicum placements and what benefits might accrue from thinking beyond the classroom walls.

Challenges remain: the issues of programme coherence and integration as well as faculty autonomy in course design have sometimes come into conflict. This is particularly true when there is an interest in trying to make change in a programme characterized by a course-driven, department sponsored model in which each instructor and faculty member has always been free to design and deliver the course content in ways they preferred. As noted earlier, the discourses of the New Work Order (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996) also interplay with these institutional and departmental discourses, creating politically complex landscapes that programme leaders must navigate. This work is not without conflict as different communities (university, community agencies, faculty, the formal school system, students) often express competing beliefs and values. One way in which we have tried to address this socio-politically complex environment is to host a series of meetings with seminar leaders, faculty and students to talk about the Alternative Practicum, and to describe our programmatic and research goals. We have attempted to make these two way conversations: one very positive development has been the number of invitations we have already received to visit seminar classes to talk with students about this work and why we are doing it. Seminar leaders have enthusiastically embraced the approach we are taking, and are helping us to see new ways in which we might address gaps in the processes we are using to place and supervise students. Working with some other faculty however, remains a challenge.

Other challenges include how to accommodate the demands of the BC College of Teachers requirements: the prescribed number of hours in public school placements is a constraint on our ability to offer this alternative practicum opportunity to our middle years and secondary students. We have some ideas, among them offering an elective course that gives students an opportunity to design their own community based investigation and field visits. We have begun to identify some less traditional school sites – such as indigenous sponsored schools and alternative education programmes – as potential sites that meet the College requirements but still offer a more diverse and less structured school experience. We are starting to see how we might “nest” these ideas into other courses or reiterate key messages on the occasions where we have an opportunity to bring together all of our students during orientations or in other program-wide events. This process is reminiscent of Cooper's (2007) observation that cultural immersion experiences need to be carefully staged by designers in

order to enhance the transformational potential and provide a space for reflective activities so that understandings are deepened over time.

### **Transformative Practices: Evidence of Change**

What evidence of change have we been able to document given our framework of how community based field experiences might be used as a tool through which to transform our preservice teachers into critically conscious, social change agents? In the first year of our research we held a series of focus groups, interviewed individual students before and after the Alternative Practicum, as well as hosted a Knowledge Sharing Forum with community mentors and preservice teachers who participated in the Alternative Practicum. In this next section, we draw upon preservice teacher interviews to illustrate two themes that emerged from their discussions about their Alternative Practicum experience: their beliefs about the practice of teaching and the role of the teacher and their conceptions of community.

#### ***Beliefs about Teaching, Learning and Pedagogy***

I went into this experience and I came into this profession a totally different person than I'm gonna [sic] leave next year. I've fallen, I've made many mistakes, I've been unsuccessful many times. But that growth, that's made me realize that... taking risks and challenging yourself. It's basically [become] my pedagogy. (*Anna*)

I was one of these people when we first were told this was an option, I thought, "why, why would I do that...I'm going to be a teacher... I need to learn how to be in front of a class, I need to learn how to plan lessons, I need to learn how to...to classroom manage...why would I do and, you know, do a practicum anywhere else? (*Jayden*)

At first I was there, [in Africa] I was volunteering, and I was there as a *teacher*. And then, you know, slowly I started to *facilitate*, and then slowly I became a *learner*, you know, I was learning from them. (*Jayden*)

[I remember] listening to Terri talk about the Native Friendship Centre – that was one of the visits we did – and I was like "Well how is this education?" I didn't understand...but now I do. Which is kinda (sic) nice. Which is another reason why I chose the alternative [practicum]...now by participating in one, it's just like one more thing that you know you can have access to and that you can do with your schools, and that means that if they have something for that, they probably have something for something else too. It's just a matter of finding it, and now that I know it's there I can probably go out and find it. (*Alice*)

I planned this whole basketball tournament [at the Native Friendship Center] and I did up a sign up sheet for all the kids. And then only one kid signed up, and then scribbled out his name. He was pressured, you know? Not to sign it by the other kids. So what was I going to do? I had to start again. This time I made them do it... plan it and organize it. I talked to them about how they would do it, what did

they want to do. And it was a great event. We played for Tim Bits and Bragging rights. (Terry)

Definitely my beliefs about teaching it has [changed], because, I was very narrow-minded I feel like before...and I thought a teacher was a person that goes into a classroom, teaches and leaves, you know...very "Teacher"...I think now that it's more than that, it's showing students who you are, and wanting them to... to learn...wanting, to encourage them to be the best learner that they can be, and getting them excited about different places in the world, or doing something different, it's about contributing to who they *are*... And I think that's a big part of my philosophy, that I wouldn't have necessarily developed unless I hadn't done this [alternative practicum] ... You have more of a responsibility; you have an equal responsibility to guide these children, just as we do to teach them the curriculum... [Without this experience] I would've, I could've just gone through life and been...focused on here [Victoria], and gone and got a [regular teaching] job, but I think it's [teaching] more than that, it's about...it's about encouraging people to really think beyond what they think they can do...doing this has made me believe that. (Barb)

It was just an amazing experience... these kids are just so amazing, they have taught me so much about what it means to learn. So today, this teacher had set up this giant machine, but he's got this big button on it so everyone can experience what it means to make something happen. And so this kid, he stretched out so he could touch this giant button, and when he felt it [the machine] move, it was like, the most amazing moment of learning for him. I wanted to cry. It was just so wonderful. (Connie)

In these quotes we see how preservice teachers have used the alternative experience as a catalyst for thinking about their own role as educator and the work of teaching. We see evidence as well of how these preservice teachers have begun to more carefully consider their early assumptions and that this critical reflection emerged from experiences in community based sites. We believe this offers evidence of how critical consciousness is enhanced by site-based experiences, particularly when students are confronted with the discomfort of being challenged in how they think and respond to learners in these new settings.

There is also evidence of how our pre-service teacher educators are questioning their prior beliefs and taking up a modified discourse that in some way reflects new understandings that emerged for them during the alternative practicum. These examples speak to the potential that the community based experience offered: that is, their ideas of what learning encompasses went well beyond the traditional classroom walls, embracing the idea that communities outside of school settings have much to offer in the way of support to students; that community agencies offer tools for enhancing student learning in ways that classroom teachers cannot; and that engaging in partnership activities that take advantage of this shared expertise is something that should be embraced.

Note as well the tentativeness of some of the conversation, represented in these examples by the insertion of ellipses (...) and the repetition or stopping/starting of ideas which can end mid-phrase. The hesitancy and struggle to find words to describe their experience becomes more apparent; we understand this to be a representation of their efforts to engage in sense making about their own previous and emergent understandings.

### *The Concept of Community*

Another goal of our pre practicum interviews was to capture ideas related to community. What we heard most frequently however, was a greater concern about students' own personal readiness for the practicum – concerns about the details of their placement and the advantages/disadvantages of participating in a non-school practicum site. Descriptions of the learning context – or of the community it served – were almost absent from their conversations. This preoccupation with the unknown is a common feature of the pre practicum experience, but we hoped that our questions might provoke early thinking and potentially introduce a way of problematizing their assumptions.

The post practicum interviews clearly gave us much more of an understanding of both their pre and post beliefs about community as evidenced by the quotes below.

It's all community. Because they [aboriginal people] are taught to...you know, everybody is a friend, everybody is a brother, everybody is a sister, everybody is respected... Because they are members of the community. So it just...it just...it just made me go (deep breath in)...you know, 'cause I could have, I would have--given everything to every kid in that school, but it was my little class, and just the fact that they were sharing everything with their friends and with other students, it just... blew me away. (*Terry*)

Respect, you know, like different things like that, and I think *that*... you know, really helped in building a community. (*Jayden*)

I definitely found that community at that school was huge, and brought together a lot of the learning. And like I say, everybody knows everybody. It's very family oriented, even if they are only children. I mean everybody felt a part of everything... It just made the learning very positive, and they did it in a variety of ways. So it was, yeah, it just really kind of brought together what learning really is. It's not always in the classroom. (*Patti*)

[Community] is not just students, and having them abide by classroom rules...and...building a classroom community. There's building a real community too... a lot of the places that were offered [for the alternative practicum] were supporting the community, and being teachers in your community, not just in your classroom. (*Anna*)

And so, one thing that I did learn was that going into this community, this community that welcomed me beautifully, that I came in as a stranger, that there are so many cultural differences, but in essence, children are children. That 12 year old cheeky boy that sits in a classroom today in Canada at an inner city school or at a Christian school or an independent school is the same cheeky 12 year old that is sitting in Ghana... You know, they're the same people and I think that's the biggest thing I learned... We talk a lot about that [acceptance], we talk about cultural awareness, we talk about embracing it, but I think a lot of people say it and don't feel it and don't, you know... They say that they believe it, but it's just something that's kind of like, we're exposed to and we think that we should and we must, but, and I was the same way, you know. But actually going into that country and just being like, yeah, we all do love, we all want to learn, you know, we all are just

people. And that much more awareness that I learned, that I can bring into my classroom. (Nadine)

These comments emphasized several different understandings about community, including how schools and classrooms needed to create communities among learners, while others were more broadly situated in understanding the complex contexts of communities. Common to all of these understandings about community however, was an emphasis on relational qualities: the need to develop respect for others, for diversity, and for building a commitment to care for others. In this notion of community, teachers are a central component and a catalyst through which the goals of community are realized. The democratic goods of community are also emphasized as community is conceptualized as a tool through which to create equitable futures for all. The students have essentially embraced their role as a member of the community, and the values that are represented by it. We saw in these post interviews representations of pre service teachers developing identities as civic, social and educational leaders.

### *Unpacking Deficiency Scripts*

One of the themes addressed in this paper has been to challenge preservice teachers' deficiency scripts; in these examples there is evidence of how the experience of working in some settings problematized assumptions. For example, two of the participants (Nadine and Terry) completed their practica in a Ghanaian school and Native Friendship Center respectively. We can hear expressions of their efforts to unpack their privilege as white, middle class Canadians – to draw upon alternative conceptions of community, as well as how the experience helped them to visualize learners as having potential for deep and meaningful learning. Other interviews illustrated how such experiences also spoke to the inherent strengths of the communities that exist around and within the school: while tonal qualities cannot be conveyed in the written texts included here, we heard in the students voice their amazement about this potential, and also how it excited and inspired them. While we recognize that there remain colonially discursive patterns in their thinking and sense making, we have been encouraged by what we see as the early stages of transforming their thinking from *deficit* to *asset* based thinking about the community and its members.

It appears to us that the alternative practicum placement provided these pre-service teachers with compelling evidence of how their own thinking about community needed to be conceptualized differently: less as a teaching strategy for building commitment to classroom activities – something we saw as a subset of the dominant control/management discourse – and more about the ways in which respectful relationships and care were central to how *communities enabled* commitments to learning. The former stance is more about conceptualizing learning as a *tool* that maintains the teacher as the primary catalyst in the creation of community; the second illustrates an emerging ontological commitment to being a part of, and engaged with others in creating a common community with shared values. By this, we do not mean to undermine the laudable goal of teachers' actively creating conditions in classrooms for more inclusive communities, however we see the development of a broader conception of community as one that evidences a deepened understanding of schooling *as part of and integral to* a community; in effect, a representation of the thin membrane metaphor we described earlier. We also were encouraged by the kind of hybrid thinking represented in these border crossing

practices evidenced by how preservice teachers drew upon the strengths of both discourses. Hybrid forms of thinking could also be considered evidence of the development of what we have called “next practices”: creative and emergent responses to diverse, inter-related contexts, responsive to local needs.

These understandings of community are, as in the other examples, often tentative and emergent. However, if such commitments to and understandings of community can be nurtured and valued – in other spaces and places within their teacher education programme, for example – these commitments may be taken up more frequently as a foundational teaching/pedagogical practice that more often considers the community as a partner in a shared, educational enterprise. Our understanding of Cooper’s (2007) notion of staging fits well with this approach to our efforts at programme redesign and implementation.

### ***Semantic Framing***

Earlier in this paper we talked about semantic framing (Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kaplan, 2008) explained as a cognitive tool for sense making. We see in the examples above how teachers’ stories can be used to constrain understandings – such as the discourse of community building in classrooms – but also, how they enabled different understandings to be articulated and shared, as in the example of our preservice teachers in Africa and at the Native Friendship Center. As we also noted earlier in this paper, students’ narratives were powerful forces for developing an interest in the Alternative Practicum among new students as they participated in the Knowledge Sharing forum and in orientations with new preservice teachers. Each time we heard them tell these stories, we saw greater confidence and heard them articulate more clearly how their learning about themselves, their students and community had been triggered by their Alternative Practicum experiences. We see this as evidence of continued growth in their thinking and the operation of repetitive cycles of reflection and sense making. These students are clearly emerging as border crossers; becoming potential catalysts encouraging others to think more critically and to consider their own deep-seated beliefs about teaching, learning, community, and pedagogical practice.

Of course, narratives can also sediment thinking: as the story is told and retold, it can become symbolic of a particular way of thinking and then serves as a limitation on new learning. Yet we believe that many of these students have developed a “habit of mind” that enables continued re-reflection, deep thinking and inquiry so that these stories can be altered to reflect other emergent understandings as new experiences or questions act to alter trajectories in their thinking. Tracing such thinking will be difficult, but we hope that as our research continues, we will be able to re-interview these participants to see how new stories emerge from the old and illustrate their continued growth to becoming civically informed, socially conscious, critical teacher and community leaders.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has sought to explore the relationships between the shoulds of teacher education and the potential of the field experience as sites for enhanced preservice teacher learning. We explored several important shoulds in teacher education: that education should deepen understandings of socio-political contexts; that it should deconstruct privilege based in race,



class, gender, sexual orientation, age and culture to ensure inclusive, democratically informed practice; that it should conceptualize teachers as social just, critically conscious leaders for change; that it should be focused around criticality and ongoing inquiry; and finally that it should go beyond the classroom walls, and give teachers knowledge of the porous or thin boundaries between schools and communities as a means of promoting life long learning and creating more inclusive and democratic communities.

By expanding the scope of the field experience beyond the classroom walls our goal has been to disrupt and unsettle the more normalized ways in which the field experience is characterized within our teacher education programme while simultaneously introducing preservice teachers to their roles as civic educators and leaders. Our discussion of the social, political and cultural contexts of contemporary education and its policy antecedents helped to illustrate the ways in which such adaptations are always constrained. However, we also believe that there are particular enabling features of the community based alternative practicum that provide new or additional opportunities for shaping teacher identities and practices in ways that may realize socially just educational ends.

Our research seeks to trace the effects of this alternative practicum initiative over the next three years. Our early findings have shown the significant power of the unfamiliar in helping students to unpack their own beliefs about schooling, teaching and learning; their privilege as white, middle class citizens and the power of leadership and advocacy as means by which to engage as professionals.

We think the Alternative Practicum offers an important model for field experiences. We believe that it is deeply informed by educational scholarship and theories of socially transformative learning, and that it offers important insights that can be taken up by other teacher education institutions across Canada. We note however – that as in all social or educational decision-making – the sociocultural and political complexity and the conditions that exist within particular institutions must always inform how such practices are implemented. Earlier we referred to the concept of “next” rather than “best” practice. By this we mean that all processes of innovation and change are the result of adaptation and emergence, shaped by processes of ongoing inquiry and creative enactment. What is emphasized in such a conception of programmatic change is the use of situated *tactics* designed to enhance learning and address the *shoulds* of education. In other words, we do not suggest that our model is the *only* way to enable the development of socially conscious educators, but rather one that can inform the efforts of other educational institutions who can then modify and adapt our programmatic learning to their contexts.

We have many questions. For example, to what extent does this alternative experience simply provide a vehicle for already committed social justice educators? Would making this experience mandatory enable us to more effectively challenge those students who seem to have a more technical-rational view of teaching? Can we effectively trace the extent to which student beliefs have been changed through this experience? How do these students’ beliefs about teaching and learning compare to those students who do not choose the Alternative Practicum? How persistently held are commitments to community engagement when a preservice teacher continues on in the programme? Does this early experience influence their subsequent approaches to learning and teaching in the classroom? If so, how? Finding ways to more fully documenting these effects will be a challenge, but one worthy of pursuing as we set out to prepare teachers for the increasingly diverse student populations with whom we work.

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# Chapter 18

## *Disrupting Perfect: Rethinking the Role of Field Experiences*

VALERIE MULHOLLAND, KATHLEEN NOLAN, and TWYLA SALM

*Despite sustained resistance from several stakeholders and faculty members, efforts are currently underway to disrupt the field experience process within our teacher education program – one that many have been known to describe as “perfect.” The proposed changes are in part due to a six-year process of program renewal that has resulted in significant changes in four of the undergraduate teacher education programs at the University of Regina. The process of program renewal has resulted in a re-examination of all aspects of teacher education, including assessment and evaluation of teacher candidates, the development of four common core courses across programs, and a focus on social justice. While realizing that many aspects of our program continue to be strong and relevant, some people are reluctant to change field experience in any significant way. At the same time, other stakeholders and faculty members have embraced change with enthusiasm and hope, recognizing that structural changes in our teacher education programs require a review of field experience. This paper describes the “perfect program” as it presently exists, the proposed changes that have been inspired by program renewal, and two detailed examples of innovation in field experience.*

### **Being in the Groove but Not in a Rut**

The proposed changes to field experiences are not fuelled by the impulse for “change for change's sake.” Sustained concern for, and attention to, preserving what works well has informed the efforts of all engaged in the process of program renewal. Numerous checks are embedded in the practices of our Faculty to ensure that all stakeholders are consulted before, during and after any innovation is contemplated, much less implemented. In this section, a history and overview of the present state of University of Regina field experiences is described to provide a context for the proposed changes and specific innovations that have been implemented on a trial basis.

The development of field experiences in the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina has been a 40-year process of vision, experiment and adaptation grounded in a unique inter-agency cooperation between the Faculty of Education and its educational partners (Ministry of Education, Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA) and the Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation (STF)). In a discussion paper prepared for the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, Genge (1988) states:

From tentative beginnings with a voluntary, experimental program for secondary students in the mid-1960's, the Saskatchewan internships has now come full circle. The 1970's witnessed the development of the distinctive internship seminars, the inclusion of internship as a requirement of all teacher education programs and the beginnings of the teacher education programs (TEPs) for students of Native ancestry. Finally, during the 1980's the internship programs have undergone various adaptations and adjustments, and new TEP programs have been introduced. (p. 1)

Since the 1980s, the Faculty's longstanding relationship with educational partners has continued with very few major modifications to field experiences implemented, particularly to internship and the internship seminar. Presently, the Faculty is engaging in a five-year process of program renewal, resulting in greater emphasis on transformative teacher education as well as the creation of new courses in all four K-12 undergraduate teacher education programs. While a great deal of energy within the Faculty has been devoted to course innovations during this time of change, field experiences have, until very recently, been flying beneath the renewal radar. In anticipation of administrative and structural changes, greater attention is now being placed on understanding and questioning the role of field experiences in our renewed teacher education program.

### **Current Field Experiences within Programs**

Currently, students entering the Faculty of Education begin field experiences in their first year through a course requirement tied to Educational Professional Studies (EPS). EPS 100, a survey course common to all programs in K-12 teacher education, is also open to students outside the Faculty of Education. Students are assigned an elementary school placement where they observe classes for one half-day per week, for seven consecutive weeks. The primary objective of the initial experience is to begin to look at public education through an emerging theoretical lens. The students' initial in-school experience is not highly structured or assessed. In the second year, field experiences are diversified according to program requirements. For example, in the secondary program pairs of students are assigned to a middle-years classroom, where they are expected to teach beginning lessons as part of half-day sessions distributed over the course of nine weeks during one semester. In this second year, students' performance (in the classroom and in the school) is formally assessed by their cooperating teachers. In the elementary program, the field placements are more informal and tied to specific subject areas and courses. For example, students in Language Arts Education (ELNG 205) serve as language tutors in established ESL/EAL programs in either elementary or middle-years classrooms. In the third year, called the pre-internship year across programs, field experiences take a variety of forms and are generally more focused and intensive. In secondary education students are placed in pairs with a major subject area specialist for three consecutive weeks during the winter semester. In elementary education, students begin their field experiences with school placements for one day per week in the Fall semester, followed by a three-week block in the winter semester in the same classroom with the same cooperating teacher. In the third year, students' performance in each program is evaluated by both the cooperating teacher and a faculty advisor. Similarly, the pre-internship year in both programs is directed toward the

culminating field experience: the sixteen-week internship which occurs in the Fall semester of the fourth year of the program.

As is common in most teacher education programs, teacher-candidates are prepared for the field in subject area and EPS courses, with a consistent emphasis on the nexus between theory and practice throughout all courses and programs. Faculty members include course assignments which encourage and require the use of methods and ideas learned in education classes. All faculty members are engaged in supervision of the field placements. A notable feature of all teacher education programs at the University of Regina is the internship seminar, which is designed as a transition experience between university classrooms and school classrooms in the field.

### ***Internship Seminar***

The University of Regina Professional Development and Field Placement Office is responsible for administrating and coordinating the internship seminar. The following paragraphs summarize the background, stakeholders, process and planned outcomes of the seminar as described in the field placement manual.

Internship seminars facilitate the training of interns, cooperating teachers, and faculty advisors in a method of analyzing and improving teaching performance. These seminars were implemented in 1972 through a request made to the Board of Teacher Education by the STF and a recommendation from the Joint Field Experience Committee. This Committee includes representatives from the Saskatchewan Education; The Saskatchewan School Trustees Association (SSTA); The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF); the Faculty of Education, and the Education Students' Society, University of Regina; and the Saskatchewan League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents (LEADS). Since 1972 an informal relationship among the agencies has provided management and funding for the training program.

The seminars are a cooperative effort in all respects. Planning and leadership teams are recruited from the Faculty of Education, the STF staff, and the staff of various school divisions. The seminar content and delivery has remained largely constant from year to year, although each leadership team is encouraged to plan specifically for their individual group members. Materials are supplied by each agency, and costs are borne by the Faculty, the STF, and the Ministry of Education. All interns and teachers participate in internship seminars; it is a requirement in all programs. Teachers who attend the summer internship seminar are compensated. Release time is secured for teacher participants for the September seminars.

The seminar design is based on a "performing-observing-internalizing" model of learning which includes nine sequential sessions over a three and a half day period. Participants broaden their knowledge of communication, practice communication skills, and build positive relationships in pairs and in groups. In groups and in consulting pairs, they experience the feelings arising from the impact of descriptive feedback from others about their performance. They utilize feedback to plan change and improvement in their practice of the professional development process.

The planned outcome of the seminar is to create an effective working relationship between teacher and intern. Such a relationship is typified by open, clear, direct, non-binding communications. During the internship, the pair in the relationship is expected to adopt a systemized approach to planning, setting objectives for the pupils, describing procedures and

competencies that each will use, and outlining a method of assessment (i.e. data collection) of the intern. Interns are expected to set targets for professional development as part of each lesson and enter fully into self-analysis leading to improvement. During the seminar the participants are expected to try to build trust between themselves primarily, in intern/teacher pairs, but also within a small group.

When the cooperating teacher/intern partnerships are announced, the cooperating teachers, in consultation with their intern, select one of five internship seminars held consecutively over a period of 5 weeks, beginning in August and ending the third week of September. (The pairs of co-operating teachers and interns are referred to as ‘co-op pairs’ in part to instill the notion that the relationship is collegial and professional.) The three day-long seminars have identical content but are delivered in two distinct formats. Two of the seminars are held in Regina, one on campus in mid-August and a later one at a hotel off-campus. The three remaining seminars are residential experiences, where participants spend three days and three nights at a remote rustic location. All of the seminars are comprised of 4 or 5 internship pairs and led by a team of two seminar leaders; regular faculty members are encouraged (but not required) to volunteer. Most seminar leaders are retired teachers or administrators, and some leaders are practicing classroom teachers. It is very unusual for a cooperating teacher and intern not to attend a seminar. When a teacher agrees to be a cooperating teacher, participation in the seminar is an implicit expectation. Through written feedback that is collected in every seminar, participants consistently report that the experience is valuable. Generally, the University of Regina serves the southern-half of the province and does not place interns in schools in the northern-half of the province without the agreement of the University of Saskatchewan. Due to its thirty-year history, it is fair to say that the University of Regina internship seminars are a traditional, perhaps even untouchable, element of teacher education in southern Saskatchewan.

Every effort is made by the Field Coordinator and faculty members to make compatible teacher-intern partnerships, based on teaching philosophy, style, and even personality. From an administrative point of view, one advantage the seminar provides is the opportunity to identify early in the semester partnerships that may not be successful. The small-group approach is useful because seminar leaders are able to work closely with the pairs. The leaders are able to promote the development of a productive professional relationship between the pairs and to employ, where necessary, conflict resolution strategies to address issues that may impair or impede professional growth.

### ***Supervision and Evaluation***

Approximately 25% of interns are supervised by regular faculty members, while the remainder is supervised by graduate students, retired teachers and administrators who are contracted to work as faculty advisors. Typically, a faculty advisor visits her/his interns five times during the internship semester – a sequence that includes an introductory visit, three formal observations of teaching and a visit to review the intern’s final evaluation. The Field Placement Office provides an annual orientation and a professional development seminar for all faculty advisors. Although the faculty advisors consult and collaborate with the cooperating teacher regarding the assessment of the intern throughout the process, ultimately the final evaluation is determined solely by the cooperating teacher. (Cooperating teachers are encouraged to share informal assessments with the intern and advisor on at least a monthly basis.) The IPP (Intern



Placement Profile) consists of 64 discrete items on which interns are evaluated on a 4-point scale.

The Director of the Field Placement Office approves and enters the final grades for internship, which are recorded as pass or fail. As stated earlier, all other field placement grades are tied to individual courses in the various K-12 programs. Written evaluations of the faculty advisor orientation sessions and internship seminars are completed by cooperating teachers, interns and faculty leaders. These informal surveys are compiled and analyzed by the Field Placement Office and are used to inform decision making.

### ***Program Renewal***

Although the structure and philosophy of our teacher education programs have changed substantially in recent years (to emphasize, for example, more transformative and anti-oppressive education), the structure of field placements has not changed dramatically. Through the process of renewal, we reaffirmed that faculty members, along with our stakeholders, were largely satisfied with the structure and sequence of field placements. The only substantive change to field placements anticipated to take place in the renewed program will occur in the second year of the program, when the plan is for students to successfully complete an alternate field placement in a community setting.

Sumara, Davis, and Iftody (2008) remind us of the importance of disrupting the status quo because normalizing discourses “become an insidious instrument for undermining unpredictability, messiness and surprise in learning how to teach” (p. 156). Britzman (2003) suggests that there are cultural myths that become normalizing discourse in teacher education. While schools are often named as the culprit in perpetuating cultural myths, we argue that teacher education programs are frequently complicit in the discursive production of static teacher identities. The proposed changes to the internship seminar which we have piloted, and write about in this paper, are intended to disrupt what has been ‘normal’ for thirty years in our faculty.

### **Internship Innovations**

As mentioned previously, field experiences have been, for the most part, flying beneath the renewal radar. Recently, however, some attention has been paid to re-conceptualizing the purpose and focus of the sixteen-week internship. For example, two years ago a pilot program that placed students in interprofessional teams in a number of community schools was implemented. In these cases, a pre-service teacher collaborated with a nursing student, a social work student and a human justice student, all of whom were focused on a common health and learning issue that affected the students in the intern’s classroom. The interprofessional model is consistent with the SchoolPLUS model (developed provincially in 2001) and the Romanow Report (2002) nationally. Two subsequent examples of innovation, related to internship, illustrate the recent changes in faculty members’ interpretations and approaches to the field experience. The first example focuses on virtual internship supervision, using information and communication technologies, while the second example focuses on the creation of an alternative internship seminar.

### ***Virtual Supervision***

For several years, researchers studying teacher education have been recommending a careful and critical study of the connections between methods courses and field experiences (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). According to Van Zoest and Bohl's (2005) model for the current (traditional) constellation of learning communities in mathematics teacher development, there is a very weak connection with little to no overlap between the university teacher education community and the internship (field experience) classroom community. It almost seems as if the university teacher education program is a hoop through which pre-service teachers must jump in their transitions from what they know and did as mathematics students to what they know and plan to do as mathematics teachers. As Lerman (2001) points out in his review of mathematics teacher education research, it may be that "student teachers have a sense of who and how they will be as teachers before coming to the course" and that "the ideas that we offer ... do not impinge on that initial sense of being a teacher" (p. 48).

From the perspective of a mathematics teacher educator, encouraging pre-service teachers to reflect and act on new, inquiry-based strategies for instruction and assessment in mathematics is a challenging task. In spite of introducing new strategies during curriculum classes in the teacher education program, traditional textbook and teacher-directed approaches still prevail in most secondary mathematics classrooms (Jaworski, 2001; Lerman, 2001; Nolan, 2006). There is a need to mentor pre-service secondary mathematics teachers as they negotiate transitions from the theories of university curriculum courses to the practices of the classroom – in this case, to the practices of their secondary school mathematics internship classroom. Pre-service teachers require opportunities to try out the alternative instruction and assessment strategies that they studied in their university course work through a reflective and integrated approach.

As part of the interns' professional development process during the internship, a faculty member is expected to visit, observe and conference with her/his assigned interns approximately five times per semester. While a reasonable expectation under some circumstances, such a limited contact approach is not conducive to creating and sustaining a relationship with the intern that is supportive of the intern's professional growth. The visits are too infrequent and too short in duration for the faculty advisor to make a difference in the theory-practice transitions of mathematics teachers. Student teachers' negotiations of the theory-practice transitions from university courses to school classrooms is challenging and requires an exploration of multiple modes and models for mentoring and professional development.

Through a digital internship pilot project currently underway, virtual visits with interns are being introduced in such a manner that the faculty-intern conferencing process can be ongoing, synchronous, and without geographical boundaries, expanding into the realm of individual office and classroom spaces. This notion of an ongoing, feedback-oriented conversational approach is a necessary change to the faculty advisor role and relationship with the interns in order to work toward a smoother transition between the pre-internship university courses and the internship field experience, as well as stimulate professional reflection on becoming a mathematics teacher.

The purpose of the digital internship pilot project is to create and sustain a professional development relationship between faculty advisors and their interns through the use of multiple technologies, such as desktop video conferencing, online chat and discussion forums,

and collaborative authoring/editing through Wiki spaces. Instead of the limited approach of visiting the schools five times during the internship semester, faculty advisors are able to supplement these visits with additional virtual visits. The pilot project is being conducted by three faculty advisors through a participatory case study approach, with each advisor working with three interns in the research process. Data is being collected through interviews and focus groups (both in person and through web conferencing) and through a reflective artifact (digital diary or Weblog) to understand the role that virtual visits could play in the development of secondary mathematics teachers.

The digital internship pilot project asks the question: What are the *real* possibilities for *virtual* intern conferencing? By introducing virtual visits through the use of multiple technologies, real possibilities exist for taking the faculty-intern mentoring process in a new direction where interns and faculty advisors become part of a community, discussing and grappling with the many theory-practice transitions facing them at their schools and with their students. In addition to working toward a smoother transition between pre-internship university courses and the internship field experience it is anticipated that this pilot project will also provide insight into new models for blended real/virtual intern supervision that could result in a reduced burden of travel and labour costs associated with supporting faculty advisor travel between the University of Regina and schools throughout southern Saskatchewan.

### ***Alternate Internship Seminar***

Once Faculty Council approved program renewal, systemic examination of the component parts of the teacher education programs at the University of Regina began. A cross-program committee was created to identify the elements of the seminar that were considered non-negotiable. That said, the committee was also charged with the task of questioning the so called non-negotiables of the seminar and of imagining other ways the existing and newly developed outcomes created implicitly by program renewal for the internship seminars could be met. Under the leadership of the Director of the Field Placement Office, a group of fifteen faculty members met monthly over the course of 2008-2009 to construct a draft plan for a renewed seminar that was more closely aligned with current program initiatives within the Faculty of Education.

The process of re-evaluation proved to be complicated. Some committee members had been actively involved in both program renewal and the field components of teacher education, particularly in the area of faculty advising and seminar facilitation. Other committee members were interested in the process but had limited or no experience with any of these program components. The lack of practical experience did not deter the members from engaging in vigorous debate regarding innovations or suggestions for major or minor changes.

After extended professional conversations, the following non-negotiables regarding seminar content and process were maintained: the dialogue and the internship contract. The dialogue is a structured conversation between the cooperating teacher and the intern designed to establish the foundation for a personal and professional relationship. The internship contract is a formal document that records a range of commitments that are negotiated, and agreed upon, by the intern and cooperating teacher. The commitments include items as mundane as where to park at school to more complex pedagogical decisions. Through extended discussion in committee, it was agreed that aspects of the existing modules related to building communication and problem-solving skills and the process for evaluating the intern's

growth should be maintained. It was also agreed that while the essence of the seminar content was acceptable, the delivery of the modules would intentionally reflect constructivist approaches to learning, rather than the direct transmission of information favoured in the past. In other words, the committee recognized the need to disrupt the normalizing discourses that had characterized the seminars. The sum of the non-negotiable items constitutes approximately half of the three days devoted to the seminar.

As well, this internship seminar renewal committee agreed in principle that the implementation of new modules related to teaching to diversity, legal issues related to internship, and broader concerns regarding evaluation and assessment could be valuable additions to the content of the internship seminar. The intent was not to teach the content as if these concepts were new to either the intern or the cooperating teacher. Rather, the writers sought to open up the space to contextualize theories learned in teacher education classes that are often considered irrelevant once “teaching in the real world” begins. Based on these recommendations, the writers delivered a pilot seminar with four secondary cooperating teachers and their interns in August 2009.

As the developers of the pilot seminar, we chose to focus on teaching to diversity as the first module to develop for the renewed seminar. Inspired by anti-oppressive teaching theory, we created a three-hour module that engaged cooperating teachers and interns in collaborative learning and structured dialogue about race, white privilege and equity in contemporary Saskatchewan classrooms (Earick, 2009; Marx, 2006; Pollock, 2008; Trepagnier, 2006). The content of the activities that we designed was familiar to the interns in the seminar, particularly since they have been immersed in similar discussions throughout the course work leading up to internship. Some of the cooperating teachers revealed to us in conversation and in written evaluations that most of the content was new to them. In that way, directly addressing the gaps in understanding related to anti-oppressive education helped level the power differential that is so common between cooperating teachers and interns (Anderson, 2007).

We began the teaching to diversity session with an introductory activity that asked the participants to write what they knew about eight key terms drawn from or related to the articles we used in a cooperative learning activity to follow. The activity served two purposes; first, it provided an opportunity to assess prior knowledge and second, it exemplified a differentiated instruction strategy that was taken up earlier in the seminar. The introduction was followed by a jigsaw activity based on four articles selected from Mica Pollock’s (2008) edited collection, *Everyday Antiracism: Getting Real about Race in School*. Each cooperating teacher/intern pair was assigned one article to read with the following instructions: prepare to summarize the content of the article and generate discussion with the group. Pairs were given approximately 45 minutes to complete the reading and the task. The groups gathered together around a large table to discuss their articles. After a robust discussion in which the participants examined the ways that theory might inform their teaching, the writers asked the group how this knowledge might be assessed on the IPP. The idea that anti-oppressive practices will be an expectation for interns was not only new for the cooperating teachers, but the concept ignited a professional conversation that had not been present in previous years. The module closed with a return to the terms that were introduced at the beginning of the workshop. Not only was the collective understanding of the group enriched by the activities, the challenge of anti-oppressive teaching was made visible in the “real world” we share as interns, classroom teachers and teacher educators. At the time, we were pleased (though somewhat surprised) by the level of genuine appreciation and stimulation expressed by all of the participants, and this

was later confirmed in the anonymous written evaluations of the seminar. Perhaps this should not be surprising as the seminar has genuinely engaged and valued the synergy created between the cooperating teacher, the intern and the faculty advisor. Zeichner (2002) suggests that there is often a disconnect between the academy and field, where each are mutually ignorant of the other and the principles that underpin their work. If the seminar renewal process provides a fusion opportunity for faculty members and cooperating teachers to co-construct teacher education together then it becomes possible to fathom “breaking out of the box of traditional student teaching model” (Zeichner, 2002, p. 60).

### Solid and Harmonious, but Seeking More

The University of Regina enjoys a “solid” reputation among its stakeholders in the Province of Saskatchewan and, some would say, beyond our borders. The harmonious relationship the university has enjoyed with the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, LEADS, SSBA and the Ministry of Education is a testimony to the efforts of faculty members to work in collaboration with entities charged with the responsibility of delivering public education in the province. The price of harmony has not been the sacrifice of professional integrity. The university protects its responsibility to provide leadership through research and critique of educational practices and policies. Because of the relationships with and commitment to stakeholders, the Faculty of Education had cause to expect, and indeed receive, the involvement of our partners in the ongoing process of change. To that end, the Faculty hosted a series of meetings with school divisions and professional partners during the 2008-2009 year to apprise our partners of the changes to the program. We continue to involve our partners, and indeed have had input from stakeholders in the two innovations described in this paper.

Change is always hard work, particularly if we expect to make changes through consensus. We have been prompted to think deliberately about our roles as teacher educators and to engage in the same kind of self-analysis and critique that we expect of our students (Zeichner, 2005). Despite the hurdles, we have made measured steps towards aligning field experiences with the philosophical and practical implications resulting from program renewal.

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# Chapter 19

## *An Overview of Mount Royal University's Existing Field Experiences and Related Features that Enhance the Approved Bachelor of Education Program*

IRENE NAESTED, JODI NICKEL, STEFAN SIKORA, and NORMAN VAUGHAN

*This paper envisions the role field experience, courses, and assessment play in teacher education – what is possible in educational practice. It provides a brief description of the Bachelor of Education program at Mount Royal University including the field experiences extant in the present teacher education university-transfer program and practica. We are in the unique situation of having had the opportunity to build a new degree program with relatively few constraints. We describe the courses which have been developed to create a synergistic relationship between the theory and practice of teaching, a program which includes the desired teaching qualities and the broad based assessment practices which are integrated throughout the program. We believe we have captured many of the most valuable elements contained within a wide range of established Bachelor of Education programs, all of which have been embedded within the current program plan.*

### Introduction

This paper comprises a brief description of the approved Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program at Mount Royal University including the existing field experiences in our present teacher education program and the practica experiences. After describing the philosophical foundations and key features, we describe the theory-practice connections fostered through e-journals and broad-based assessment approaches. The program includes early field experience, curriculum and instruction courses, faculty supervised practica, and a capstone course. We describe the courses which have been developed and delivered to create a synergistic relationship between the theory and practice of teaching.

We are in the unique situation of having the opportunity to build a degree program with relatively few constraints. We are required to follow the Campus Alberta Quality Council “Quality Assessment and Quality Assurance” handbook, which stipulates components of the Bachelor of Education degree structure. In addition to this we believe we have captured the most valuable qualities of several Bachelor of Education programs and have embedded them in our program plan. Crocker and Dibbons’ (2008) baseline study of teacher education in Canada reflects important aspects of our guiding principles for the Bachelor of Education

program plan in order to overcome some of the limitations in other B.Ed. programs and to closely connect course work to the field experiences.

The literature's advice that clinical experience should be closely inter-woven with coursework...opportunity to relate their university coursework to their classroom teaching, indicates that there is merit to integrating the practicum more closely with university coursework. When this occurs, students are generally better prepared to make sense of the ideas, theories, and concepts addressed in their academic work and as student teachers they are better able to see the interface between theory and practice. This approach could reduce the practice-theory gap that has tended to haunt teacher education programs. (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008, p.108)

We have sought to make these recommended connections between the coursework and practicum, particularly through extensive faculty involvement in the practicum, to scaffold this interface between theory and practice.

### **Bachelor of Education Program Summary**

The B.Ed. program length is four years for the Elementary and Secondary Teaching Route (120 credits) Bachelor of Education degree. In the five year concurrent degrees for the Elementary Route and Secondary Teaching Route (150 credits), students receive a B.Ed. and a B.A or B.Sc. In these five years, students develop a teachable subject major as well as a minor. The elementary route includes eight program of studies curriculum and instruction courses (PSCI) and the secondary route includes a minimum of two. Students are involved in field experiences in their first two years in the program through four core required courses (a total of 100 hours). In the third year, students undertake Practicum I (5 weeks) and in the fourth or final year of studies, students are involved in Practicum II for a total of 14 weeks in schools (9 weeks). The final course is a capstone course designed to be taken after the practicum II experience.

#### ***Education and Schooling: Philosophical Foundation***

The Bachelor of Education Degree to be offered at the newly accredited Mount Royal University is rooted in what can be termed the “educational imperative”. This means we regard learning as a natural and essential component of the human condition wherein we are forced by circumstance both to learn and to continue learning in order to survive and to enhance our survival. When our current department emerged from where we had been housed in what was then the Department of Behavioral Sciences to form our own department, we specifically requested to be known as the Department of Education and Schooling. We hold that “education” is a much broader term that characterizes individual lifelong learning in a variety of contexts whereas “schooling” is more formal and certainly a more restricted set of grouped experiences usually occurring in a school setting.

The significant differences and similarities that exist between both of these related processes are impressed upon all education students once they enter the program. In that



education is grounded in challenges encountered in day to day life, we consider it imperative to expose all our teaching candidates to a variety of life skills, that we have called a “zoetic skill set”, which will provide them with the appropriate tools to be used in instructing their own future students. Zoetic skill sets include the examination and development of one’s values and worldview.

Besides being introduced to the distinction between education and schooling and the elements contained within both a general and personal zoetic skill set, all teaching candidates are exposed to three other major facets of the program, including what are termed “knowledge of the commonplaces”, the importance of specific “teaching qualities”, and “the universal aspects of learning” (Sikora, n.d.), concepts which various members of the department have developed from their own teaching experience and consider to be of significant value in the process of teaching and learning.

Mount Royal University is a learning community whose distinctive character focuses on excellent instruction informed by high quality scholarship. Low teacher/student ratios enhance the overall learning experience where individuals are engaged in a curriculum collaboratively designed to create synergy across courses. Personal relationships between professors and the students in their classes are paramount and provide an essential aspect of the Mount Royal University’s Bachelor of Education experience. What we model for and nurture within the individual student is what we hope they take away with them to pass on to their own charges once they have successfully completed their teacher education program. Highly personalized instruction supports diversity, innovative approaches to teaching and learning and a genuine sense of community.

School field experiences begin within the teaching candidate’s first courses, a key and foundational element in the program. Interacting with young learners and practicing teachers is critical for theory-practice connections. Students develop an evolving teaching philosophy based on opportunities to research, discuss and critically analyze all aspects of education and schooling.

As with other Bachelor of Education programs our students enrol in various arts and science courses. The Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Science are highly supportive and have designed courses that meet the needs of our teacher candidates. For example, the History Department designed courses that include the curriculum topics for elementary and secondary social studies.

Courses offered in Mount Royal’s Bachelor of Education program conform directly to the variables outlined in Alberta Teaching Quality Standards (IQS) Ministerial Order #016/97. Further, each of the courses within the B.Ed. program are grouped within one of three interrelated and recurrent strands: *The Teacher*, *The Learner*, and *The Community*. These strands complement the variables comprising the *Teaching Quality Standards*, as follows:

<i>The Learner</i>	<i>The Teacher</i>	<i>The Community</i>
Student variables	Teacher variables	Regulatory variables
		School variables
		Parent and societal variables

The following Venn diagram illustrates the attributes a Mount Royal University teacher candidate develops through our courses (Figure 1).

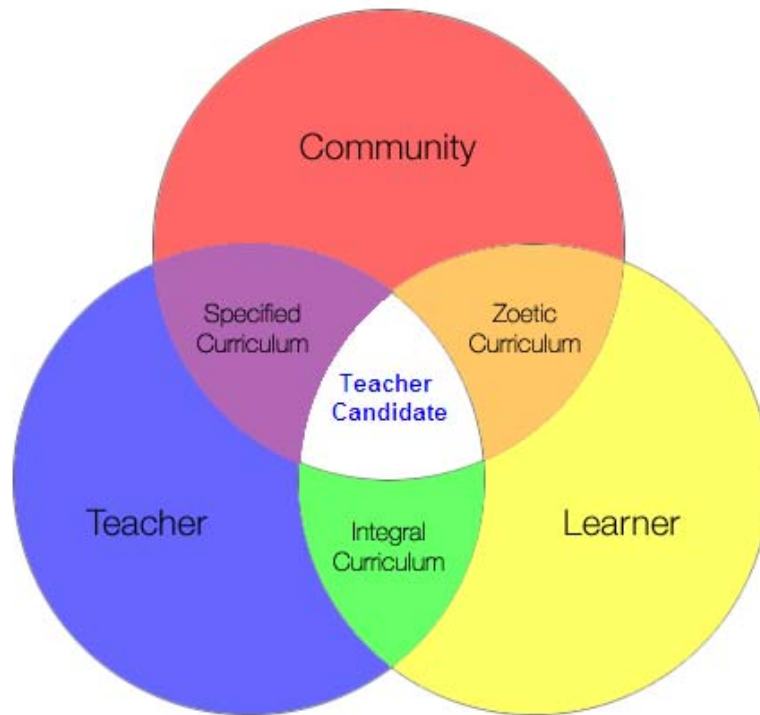


Figure 1: Mount Royal University's Bachelor of Education Student Skills Model

*The Learner:* Through courses focused on learners, teacher candidates develop a strong knowledge of child development and teaching strategies that address the needs of various learners. The courses themselves are learner centred so that students participate in many of the strategies to foster higher level thinking that they will later use with young learners.

*The Teacher:* Students are engaged in examining six distinctive teaching qualities that provide guidance, direction and reflection. These qualities are: relationships, integrity, authenticity, thoughtfulness, diversity, and knowledge of the five commonplaces of teaching. The latter includes reflection upon learners and learning, teachers and teaching, schools and classrooms, curriculum and subject matter, as well as culture and society.

*The Community:* A genuine sense of community includes family, as well as school and society. Values, ideologies, and competing worldviews evident in history and society, influence prospective teachers' assumptions as to what it means to be a teacher in Canada.

The *Community, Learner and Teacher* intersect to create three interconnected facets of curriculum: *Specified, Integral and Zoetic*. Specified curriculum includes the knowledge, skills and attributes (ksa) as set forward by the Ministry of Education as well as elements of the newly established B.Ed. curriculum at Mount Royal University. Integral curriculum are the implied but unspecified elements of the Ministry's education curriculum and core elements of the MRU curriculum. Zoetic (life skills) curriculum includes examination and development of values, attitudes, beliefs, worldview, and the incorporation of the general learning outcomes as specified by MRU. Personal life skills also include on-going decision making such as that practiced within minor and optional course selection.

The distinguishing features of the Bachelor of Education program which are linked and directly applicable to teacher candidates' success in field experiences include a number of interrelated elements. They constitute the many and varied ways whereby we endeavour to weave course work with field experiences in a manner which parallels Crocker and Dibbon's (2008) recommendation that "clinical experience should be closely inter-woven with coursework" (p. 108). For a more specific rendering of these features and a sample student program, please refer to the Appendix.

### Theory-Practice Connections

The two introductory courses, EDUC 1231 and 1233, employ the core text *Understanding the Landscape of Teaching* which introduces students to the *commonplaces of teaching* and these become central throughout the rest of the program (Naested, Potvin & Waldron, 2004). These five commonplaces include:

- Learners and learning
- Teachers and teaching
- Schools and classroom
- Curriculum and subject matter
- Culture, society and history

Teacher candidates are encouraged to view key events occurring in their field experiences through the lenses of each of the commonplaces. They are provoked to question each of the commonplaces in order to analyze and better understand their individual field experiences, particularly in discussions and journals. Professors consistently draw them back to these commonplaces in order to facilitate theory-practice connections and a richer analysis of issues related to teaching.

*Worldview* is another central concept in the introductory courses. Worldviews are inevitably influenced by families, friends, education, and the values of society. One of the aims of teacher education is to expose assumptions in those worldviews and develop integrated knowledge – a worldview that is open-minded enough to consider the perspectives of others and question one's own presuppositions. A teacher's worldview can be broadened by weaving the interests of all of the commonplaces into that individual's worldview.

The *Teaching Qualities* (TQ) are also introduced in the first course and are revisited throughout the program. According to Naested et al., (2004) these essential teaching qualities include:

- Knowledge
- Relationships
- Diversity
- Authenticity
- Thoughtfulness
- Integrity

This list mirrors the knowledge, skills and attributes of the Teaching Quality Standard of Alberta recommended in the Government of Alberta Ministerial Directive 4.2.1, and outlined in Table 1:

<b>Knowledge, Skills and Attributes</b>
<b>a)</b> Ability to apply pedagogy appropriate to individual and unique circumstances
<b>b)</b> Capacity to understand and adhere to the legislated moral and ethical frameworks
<b>c)</b> Capacity and ability to understand the various subject disciplines
<b>d)</b> Ability to utilize a variety of approaches to teaching and learning
<b>e)</b> Capacity to engage in a range of planned activities
<b>f)</b> Ability to create and sustain fertile learning environments
<b>g)</b> Ability to develop and implement a broad spectrum of meaningful learning activities
<b>h)</b> Ability to access and apply a variety of technologies
<b>i)</b> Ability to gather and use information about students' learning
<b>j)</b> Capacity to establish and maintain worthwhile learning partnerships
<b>k)</b> Capacity to engage in and demonstrate both career-long and lifelong learning

Table1: Teaching Quality Standards (adapted from Alberta Education, 1997)

In keeping with ideals of sustainable assessment (Boud, 2000), teacher candidates are encouraged to track their own growth with respect to these teaching qualities as evidenced in their planning, teaching, and other interactions with young people. For example, individual lessons may be assessed with regard to the degree to which they have “(applied) pedagogy appropriate to individual and unique circumstances” (see Table 1) in order to genuinely address student learning needs. Students are also required to analyze the impact of these particular qualities upon the teaching and learning experiences they observe in schools.

Worldview, the five commonplaces, and the teaching qualities form the backbone for theory-practice connections. Professors prompt theory-practice connections through assignment expectations and also response to student contributions in classroom discussions and written assignments. Classmates also play a role in forging a richer understanding. Students in these courses work in cooperative learning groups or cohorts in their school field-experience as well as in class projects and assignments. The purpose of the groups is to assist students to understand and apply course content in an atmosphere of open-minded collegiality. The groups are used for collaborative discussion and responses, reading and class review, journal and field experience sharing. The aim is to develop shared praxis:

As you deliberately think about the specific interests of each commonplace and integrate their interests into your teaching practice, you are engaging in praxis. When you share your reflections with practising teachers, principals, and professors, that praxis is shared reflection. (Naested et al., 2004, p. 5)

### ***Professional Reflection e-Journals***

Journals are particularly useful tools for teacher candidates to confront their own assumptions, question the theories they are learning, discuss challenges and problems encountered and consider alternatives to practice (Chak, 2006; Loughran, 2002). Their initial journals often involve low levels of reflection “with little questioning, perspective taking or consideration of the broader context” (Nickel, Sutherby, Garrow-Oliver, 2010, p. 51). Professors nudge teacher candidates to higher levels of reflection through probing questions, helping to relate what they are learning in their course work to the practicum environment. Higher level reflection involves interpreting the situations in the field experience classroom using theory-practice connections, exploring the perspectives of each of the commonplaces and delineating alternatives with a view to informing and influencing practice.

Reflection is recommended as a way of helping educators analyze content knowledge in light of their own practice, often reconsidering their assumptions (Bolton, 2005; Clark 1995; Ferraro, 2000; Grossman & Williston, 2001; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; Moon, 1999; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004; Schön, 1987). Lee (2008) argues that teacher candidates must engage in critical reflection on their own beliefs and ideas as well as the knowledge learned in the post-secondary classroom to be able to transfer that knowledge to their practice in classrooms with children. Field or practicum experiences must be included to “facilitate development of more sophisticated conceptions of the teaching and learning process” (Lee, 2008, p. 117). It is in the application of theory *to* practice and the analysis of practice *using* theory that teacher candidates recognize the complexity of teaching and become more sophisticated in their own self-assessment and skill development

In the four core courses that require field experience placements teacher candidates are required to keep a professional reflective e-journal. Writing and reflecting, discussing and sharing thoughts, and questions on learning and teaching, are important ways of becoming a thoughtful teacher of children. Journal entries focus on how the school experiences relate to ideas and issues that are explored in the course readings, class presentations, and discussion. Entries are written after each school field experience. This is a professional journal, therefore students are required to adhere to the *Professional Code of Ethics*. Suggested topics are discussed in class.

The journal is concluded in a capstone course (“The Professional Teacher: Integrating Ideas, Values and Praxis”) taken in the final year after the second practicum. This course is designed to assist students in their practicum with the integration of their knowledge and experience in teaching and learning into a clear and cohesive teaching philosophy. This philosophy is also recorded within the individual teacher candidate’s professional teaching e-portfolio.

### ***Professional Standards***

In order for students to be admitted into the Bachelor of Education program they must have completed a *Police Security Clearance*. Students entering field experiences are required to sign a *Confidentiality Agreement* requiring them to maintain strict confidentiality regarding any client information or data. Students are familiarized with the Alberta Teachers Association *Code of Professional Conduct* prior to classroom placements, specifically in courses EDUC 1231, 1233, 2221, as well as Program of Studies Curriculum and Instruction (PSCI) courses. Students are

also made aware of Mount Royal's Code of Student Conduct and plagiarism policy during their program orientation, and in all core and elective education courses.

In addition to the professional competencies, the curriculum in the Bachelor of Education program is designed to integrate institution-wide learning outcomes emphasized in all Mount Royal programs:

- the development of both critical reflective thinking and sound ethical reasoning
- the enhancement of oral and written communication skills
- a capacity to engage in information retrieval and evaluation
- assisting all students in achieving a high degree of computer literacy
- the ability to effectively engage in group learning

### ***Pre-Practicum Field Experiences***

There are four courses in which the students are placed in schools to work with teachers and young learners, two in the student's first year (30 hours x 2) + two in the second year (20 hours x 2) = 100 hours:

EDUC 1231 – The Teacher: Professional Dimensions I (30 hours)

EDUC 1233 – The Teacher: Professional Dimensions II (30 hours)

EDUC 2321 – The Learner: Education and Individual Development (20 hours)

EDUC 2371 – The Learner: Language Development and Literacy (20 hours)

Placements in local school classrooms augment each of the four foundational education courses. The purpose is to give the teacher candidate concrete (theory-to-practice) understanding of the learning and teaching and roles and responsibilities of practicing professional teachers early in the education program. These pre-professional courses are designed to increase students' understanding of the teaching profession and the issues that concern it, the changing and challenging role of the teacher, and how to become a critically reflective learner and teacher. The aim is to develop teamwork and collaboration skills, reflective and critical thinking, to gain experience in working with and learning from peers, and to develop skills in teaching and in building rapport with young learners and mentor teachers. At the conclusion of the required field experience hours (30 or 20) the school based mentor teacher is asked to complete a *Field Experience Report Form* for each semester. The school based mentor teacher comments on the pre-service teacher's communication skills, preparation (punctuality, dependability, attire, positive attitude, enthusiasm) deportment and professional conduct.

### ***Program of Studies, Curriculum and Instruction Courses (PSCI)***

These courses provide an introduction to teaching and learning in teaching subject specializations. The pre-professional teachers examine the basis for curriculum development, the dilemmas encountered in curriculum decision-making, the various orientations that can

guide curriculum decision making and the role of the teacher in the process. These courses also explore the knowledge and skills required to implement the program of studies in elementary, junior and senior high schools. The focus is on curriculum, teaching-learning philosophies and methodologies. Each methods course will address a range of approaches to developing instruction, planning units of study, integrating curriculum, developing resources and selecting appropriate and meaningful assessment strategies to meet students' needs.

Each Program of Studies Curriculum and Instruction course (PSCI) falls under the general categories of both "Teacher" and "Student". Students in the elementary teaching route take eight PSCI courses, one in each of the following: mathematics, science, English language arts, social studies, art, music, drama, and physical education. Students who choose the secondary teaching route are required to take at least two PSCI courses, one in their major and one in their minor area of study.

The PSCI professors are required to supervise students in the schools in the two practica experiences as part of their workload. This greatly enhances the connection with course of studies, the pre-professional teacher, the school based mentor teachers and other stakeholders in the community.

### ***Practica I & II (5 + 9 = 14 weeks)***

In the third and fourth, or final year of the program, teacher candidates are placed in two supervised practica in schools (5 + 9 weeks). Fourteen weeks of practicum exceeds provincial standards for teacher education programs.

The Teacher: *Practicum I* (5 weeks in school) focuses on inquiry, reflective planning, and the teaching and assessment practices. Students are expected to be directly involved in all aspects of teaching for 50% of required time during their last three weeks of the practicum.

The *Practicum II* - Final Practicum II (9 weeks in school) experience focuses on inquiry, reflective planning, and the teaching and assessment practices. Students are expected to be directly involved in all aspects of teaching for 50 % by the third week, 75% by the end of the sixth week, and 100% during the last three weeks of the practicum.

During these professional terms, students are also engaged in program of study curriculum and instruction courses. The courses are deliberately arranged to create a holistic experience for the teacher candidates, generating rich understanding of teaching, learning and assessment when related to their practica. It is expected that teacher candidates graduate with an evolving teaching philosophy based on opportunities to research, discuss, and critically analyze various aspects of education and schooling. The teacher candidate in this practicum is assessed on a pass or fail.

### ***Faculty Supervision of Practica I & II***

We believe that the education faculty direct involvement in the supervision of practica and Program of Studies Curriculum and Instruction courses (PSCI) is an important component of the inherent value of the teacher candidate's practica experience. This has been pointed out by Crocker and Dibbon "A chief criticism of teacher education programs is that faculty have become disconnected from the field, resulting in courses and programs that are not as relevant as practitioners demand" (2008, p.110). A practicum placement coordinator is the initial contact with the schools and placement of students in the schools. However, it is the

education faculty professors who have taught the program of studies, curriculum and instruction courses (PSCI) who will be the supervisors in the Practica I and II. This is an important aspect in connecting the course work, the teacher candidate, the university education faculty professor, the school, the teachers, and the young learners (university and community). The faculty professor who teaches the PSCI courses also supervise these students in practicum. This fosters connection with the mentor teachers, awareness of community needs, relationship with the students and application of course content.

“The success of the teacher education program is determined by the quality of the relationships that develop between the faculty of education and the school” (Crocker and Dibbon, 2008, p.111). The Bachelor of Education Program at Mount Royal University is making every effort to develop relationships between the university and the schools. Presently we place approximately 340 students per term (approximately 75 schools) in school field experiences in the students’ first four core courses of the program. The students work as volunteers in the school classrooms, actively working with young learners, not merely passively observing. School personnel frequently contact faculty members requesting field experience students, a strong testament to the valuable role students play in schools.

### ***The Capstone Course***

“The Professional Teacher: Integrating Ideas, Values and Praxis” is a required *capstone course* for pre-professional teachers in their final term of the Bachelor of Education Program during the last practicum term. The course is planned as an intensive week-long session led by a team of education faculty members. Participants critically reflect upon significant issues and experiences gleaned from their general education, education, and elective courses, their field experiences and practica.

Throughout this capstone course, which will be facilitated by a team of faculty, pre-professional teachers are engaged in written assignments, individual and group projects, research and presentations. The course is designed to be taken in the *last professional term*. The final assessment is based, in part, on the completion of a teaching e-portfolio. Participants are expected to complete their teaching e-portfolio, including an integrated personal philosophy of teaching and learning, by addressing various stipulated topics. The e-portfolio is assessed on a tripartite scale of “Distinction” (Honors), “Satisfactory” (Pass), or “Unsuccessful” (Fail). Assistance in the overall assessment of the e-portfolios is generated by soliciting input from various *stakeholders* such as school-based administrators, teachers and Mount Royal faculty members within and outside the Department of Education and Schooling.

### ***Broad-Based Assessment***

A number of educational researchers (Thistlethwaite, 2006; Hedberg & Corrent-Agostinho, 1999) have stated that assessment drives learning in higher education. Entwistle (2000) indicates that the design of the assessment activity and the associated feedback can influence the type of learning that takes place in a course or program. For this reason, we have intentionally taken a broad-based assessment approach to the field experiences in our program. The focus of these experiences is on assessment *for* learning rather than simply assessment *of* learning (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007; Alberta Assessment Consortium,



2002). Students engaged in our field experiences are provided with integrated and connected opportunities for self-reflection, peer review, instructor and external assessment feedback throughout their B.Ed. program.

As previously indicated, field experiences consist of school placements in the foundational courses, school tours throughout the program, and two practica (five and nine weeks). With regards to self-reflection, “thoughtfully selected and complementary face-to-face and online approaches and technologies” are utilized (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008, p.156). The B.Ed. students are required to maintain an online journal and develop an e-portfolio throughout the program. This journal and portfolio process enable students to make intentional and on-going connections between their field experiences and course work with continual monitoring and feedback from course professors. Currently, we have students piloting online journal and portfolio systems and their comments indicate that the self-assessment activities supported by these tools have provided them with opportunities for self-discovery, personal growth and development by enabling them to track progress and record personal accomplishments in our current Education Transfer Program (Vaughan, 2009). In addition, Boud (2000) stresses the importance of “sustainable assessment” – assessment that not only serves the goals of the courses and related field experiences but equips students to self-assess as life-long learners, in this case as professional teachers. “Being able to effectively assess their own learning is not a state they will achieve at a particular point in time, but one which will need to be continually reworked throughout their lives as new and anticipated challenges present themselves” (p. 151).

In terms of peer review, we are currently utilizing and designing a series of course-based activities to provide students with opportunities to engage in critical and constructive dialogue about their field experiences. For example, class time is provided in the foundational courses for small group discussions and presentations that enable students to discuss, debate and demonstrate how their field experiences relate to the course and program learning outcomes. Outside of class, students are using Web 2.0 technologies such as blogs (online journals) and wikis (online writing spaces) to collaboratively develop research papers and projects related to their field experiences. Our education students who are currently engaged in these types of assessment activities, state that peer review enables them to learn how to assess the work of others, develop tolerance for opposing points of view, and improve their own course work (Vaughan, 2008). Boud (2000) emphasizes that responding to peer feedback is the ideal way to complete the feedback loop to ensure that learning occurs. Vaughan and Garrison (2009) also suggest that peer review processes can help foster a sense of community, which is often a prerequisite for engaging students in deep and meaningful learning. This type of learning is characterized by a sharing of personal meaning and the validation of understanding through discourse.

The field experiences for our B.Ed. program have been designed to ensure that students receive expert assessment feedback from both Mount Royal University faculty members and K-12 mentor teachers. Our Education faculty members are responsible for assessing both the course work and related field experiences (e.g., volunteer school placements, school tours, practica). Expert panels of K-12 principals, superintendents, and curriculum leaders are used to assess students’ capstone course work and exit portfolios from our program. The focus of this expert feedback is on formative rather than summative assessment in order to assist students in developing their professional identities as teachers. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick’s (2006)

seven principles of good feedback practice have been used to guide this assessment process. These principles state that formative assessment feedback should:

1. Help clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, standards).
2. Facilitate the development of self-assessment and reflection in learning.
3. Deliver high quality information to students about their learning.
4. Encourage teacher and peer dialogue around learning.
5. Encourage positive motivational beliefs and self esteem.
6. Provide opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance.
7. Provide information to future teachers that can be used to help shape teaching.

### Summary

The Bachelor of Education Degree at Mount Royal is *both* course and experience based. The courses themselves are deliberately arranged to generate cross-course synergies. The curriculum has been designed to create a holistic experience for education students with a focus on *individual* understanding of teaching, learning and assessment. It is expected that pre-professional teachers will graduate with an evolving teaching philosophy based on opportunities to research, discuss, and critically analyze various aspects of education and schooling. In addition to the two required practica taken in the third, fourth or last year of study, four other core courses have been developed which require the students to participate in relevant classroom experiences. The pre-practica students are required to take program of studies curriculum and instruction (PSCI) courses (eight for elementary and a minimum of two for secondary route). The education faculty professors who have taught the PSCI courses are the supervisors in the Practica I and II. This is an important aspect in connecting the course work, the pre-service teacher, the university education faculty professor, the school, the teachers, and the young learners.

We are in the unique situation of having the opportunity to build a new degree program with relatively few constraints. We are required to follow the Campus Alberta Quality Council “Quality Assessment and Quality Assurance” handbook which stipulated components of the Bachelor of Education degree structure. In addition to this we believe we have captured many of the most valuable qualities contained within several Bachelor of Education programs and have embedded them in our program plan. Our program plan will overcome some of the limitations found in other B.Ed. programs by closely connecting course work to the field experiences.

We believe the role of field experiences within education programs is of the utmost importance, vital to the overall development of teacher candidates, and an experience which should be introduced at the earliest possible point in teacher education. We propose this position not only as a result of our own broad experience working with students within the field, but specifically because of the ongoing feedback we have received from the vast majority of our students who, without prompting on our part, continually inform us that their deepest understanding of good educational practice stems from experience gained from their field experiences, experiences where they are more readily able to link classroom theory to actual

practice. From our experience it is our assumption that the undeniable benefits obtained from field experiences, especially when introduced at the earliest possible level in a candidate's education, can result in the graduation of teacher candidates more prepared to face the challenges of their profession and, even more importantly in a group of individuals more equipped to evolve into the type of global citizens who can have a lasting and positive effect on not only their students but on the community at large.

We interpreted the focus area of this paper to require a form of vision casting – envisioning what role field experience might ideally play in teacher education. This was a particularly helpful exercise for us at Mount Royal University as we embark on a new degree, expanding our existing field experience. Based on feedback from faculty, students, and the broader educational community, we are confident that we have been successful in our existing University Transfer program, especially with regards to the field experience and related education courses. Students move from our existing Bachelor of Education University Transfer program highly satisfied with their experience; teachers and principals comment on the skill of our students and request them repeatedly. We attribute this success to the many features of our program described in this document including small class sizes with mentorship opportunities with faculty, rich theoretical content, expectations that students will challenge assumptions and engage in reflective practice, and regular opportunities for students to self-assess, thereby taking greater ownership for their own learning.

Will this rich platform sustain our students as we extend these field experiences to greater levels of responsibility in practice? This will depend in part upon faculty submitting themselves to the same sort of reflection and self-assessment that we demand of our students in order to continually improve the program. Faculty have committed to involvement in program assessment including self-study and scholarship with regards to of teaching and learning research that seek to answer the question, “How can faculty in the Mount Royal Education Program create assessment activities, which provide students with opportunities to receive reflective and integrated self, peer and instructor feedback to help improve their learning and our teaching practices?” In a related endeavour, faculty are involved in an assessment initiative involving interviews with students based on Richard Light's book *Making the Most of College* (2001). This study aims to give faculty a deeper understanding of how students are experiencing our degree programs so far; this qualitative data is intended to complement the quantitative data gleaned from the National Survey of Student Engagement. While these initiatives look broadly at program assessment, the field experiences will be an integral part of our program assessment. Referring back to this paper's guiding questions, we believe the foundational purpose of teacher education is to foster reflective practice; we are hopeful that faculty's modeling of reflective practice will inspire a similar commitment to reflection and lifelong learning among our teacher candidates.

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## **APPENDIX**

### ***Distinguishing Features of the B.Ed. Program Applicable to Field Experience***

- The program is both course-based and experience-based, giving students a blend of theory and practice upon which to reflect in their individual academic journeys. Courses are deliberately developed and arranged toward understanding of the learning, teaching, and assessment processes to provide an inclusive awareness of both ‘education’ and ‘schooling’. The development of Teaching Qualities (Naested, Potvin, & Waldron, 2007) and moral character is emphasized as students reflect on their individual worldviews and the impact these may have on their teaching.
- A strong experiential-based program beginning in the first and second year of the program with 100 hours of field experiences in the first four EDUC foundation courses as well as 14 weeks of practica in years 3 and 4 (or final year) of the program which exceeds provincial requirements.
- Early exposure to *actual* school experience. This provides students with the necessary time, opportunity, and experience to evolve into reflective practitioners, a quality which will serve the student, the profession, and the community.
- Small class sizes to establish a professional resource network for prospective teachers and close collaboration with professors and support personnel.
- Dedicated seats for qualified Aboriginal students.
- Helping to prepare future teachers in specific areas in which shortage is believed to be most acute, such as ESL, Special Needs, Science and Mathematics.
- Providing opportunities to develop minors such as Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) which provides the emphasis to potentially make a difference in school classrooms. Students can work toward a minor (6 – 10 courses) in the following areas: (Spanish, French, English as a Second Language, Anthropology (Aboriginal Studies), Psychology, Sociology, History, Women Studies, Religious Studies, English, Fine Arts (Art, Music, Theatre, Art History), Physical Education, Sciences (Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Zoology, Geology), Geography, Earth Sciences, Child and Youth Studies, Computer Technologies.)
- Special Needs and Inclusive Education as well as Education and Individual Development are core course requirements in the degree.
- Emphasis is on teaching excellence throughout the curriculum, instruction, evaluation and assessment and the informed use of technologies in all subject areas.
- Enhancement of communication skills (oral, auditory, written, visual and performing arts).
- Broad based assessment approaches throughout the program including field experience reports, alternative assessments, presentations, self-assessment, peer assessment, peer presentation, collaborative group assignments and assessment, web design, blended learning (Blogs, Wikis, etc.), extended response/demand essays, reflective e-journals, performance assessments, peer assessments novel/movie study, and professional teaching e-portfolios.
- Final practicum capstone course, team taught by faculty and includes the completion of a professional teaching e-portfolio which will be presented to education stakeholders.
- Program rigorously supports the diversity of values, approaches, and knowledge found in the surrounding community. The focus is on modeling excellence in teaching and learning,

on creating and adapting highly personalized instruction that pertains directly to the individual student, and on the continued value found within experiential learning.

- Design of the program addresses the need for community-based cohort learning opportunities, especially in rural and aboriginal communities, using blended learning strategies and tools. Some course sections can be offered on-site using a blend of synchronous and asynchronous communication tools.

### *Sample Student Program*

#### *Sample Student Program*

##### **Year One:**

GNE11XX	Foundation Cluster One Gen Ed
GNE12XX	Foundation Cluster Two Gen Ed
GNE13XX	Foundation Cluster Three Gen Ed
GNE14XX	Foundation Cluster Four Gen Ed
EDUC 1231	The Teacher: Professional Dimensions I
EDUC 1233	The Teacher: Professional Dimensions II
Non-Educ Course	- Can be used towards Minor
Non-Educ Course	- Can be used towards Minor
Free Elective	- Can be used towards Minor
Free Elective	- Can be used towards Minor

##### **Year Two:**

GNE21XX	Cluster One Gen Ed
GNE22XX	Cluster Two Gen Ed
GNE23XX	Cluster Three Gen Ed
GNE24XX	Cluster Four Gen Ed
EDUC 2321	The Learner: Education and Individual Development
EDUC 2371	The Learner: Language Development & Literacy
EDUC Elective	
EDUC Elective	
Free Elective	- Can be used toward Minor
Free Elective	- Can be used toward Minor

##### **Year Three:**

EDUC 4XXX	Program of Studies
EDUC 4XXX	Program of Studies
EDUC 4XXX	Program of Studies
EDUC Elective	
EDUC 2325	The Community: Understanding Current & Emerging Pedagogical Technologies
EDUC 3361	The Learner: Exceptional Students, Special Needs & Inclusive Schooling
Non-Educ Course	- Can be used towards Minor
Non-Educ Course	- Can be used towards Minor
Non-Educ Course	- Can be used towards Minor
Non-Educ Course	- Can be used towards Minor

##### **Year Four:**

Practicum I	5 weeks
Practicum II	9 weeks
EDUC 3323	The Learner: Effective Assessment – Measurement & Evaluation
EDUC 4XXX	Program of Studies
EDUC 4XXX	Program of Studies
EDUC 4XXX	Program of Studies
EDUC 4XXX	Program of Studies
EDUC 4XXX	Program of Studies
EDUC 4XXX	The Teacher: Integrating Ideas, Values and Praxis





# Chapter 20

## *Teacher Education in Situated, Selected and Connected Approaches to Becoming Students of Teaching*

KATHY SANFORD, TIMOTHY HOPPER, and CATHERINE MCGREGOR

*Teaching education programs have historically been critiqued for being fragmented and maintaining a theory-practice divide, with innovation often nullified by competing agendas and structural divisions in Faculties of Education. In this paper we discuss three innovations that we believe disrupt the traditional frame of reference for teacher education. These initiatives are (1) School Integrated Teacher Education, (2) Electronic Portfolios, and (3) Professional seminars. These innovations are connected by a commitment to help pre-service teachers and their instructors become what Dewey (1904) referred to as “students of teaching.” By this we imply an interpretive turn, allowing for theories of conflict and change, and for debate and new discourses that contribute to the psychological and emotional maturity of those learning to teach as they engage in the realities of teaching. The paper concludes with five foundational principles for teacher education programs, drawn from our examples and focused on connectedness, to develop a life-long attitude of becoming a student of teaching*

### **Introduction: Person-In-Situation Learning**

Teacher education programs have traditionally been less “programs” and more collections of courses intending to inform future teachers about significant issues, bodies of knowledge, and practical considerations related to survival in the classroom. Although there are many components of teacher education programs across the country, most including discipline-based courses (curriculum & instruction), educational foundations (history, philosophy, sociology), educational psychology (developmental understandings, special education), assessment/evaluation (formative, summative), the core of teacher education programs is seen as the field experience – where “everything I learned about teaching” happens.

Critiques of teacher education programs include concerns of fragmentation between courses, maintenance of a theory-practice divide, and use of research that does not connect to the “real world” of school (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001). Innovation in teacher education programs are too often “nullified by the structural fragmentation and competing agendas that typify traditional programs of teacher education” (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998), a structure that celebrates individual success over collective understanding and a focus for instructors on their own course as if it was the only course in the program (Goodlad, 1990). From the perspective of the university community

more focused on transmission of identified bodies of knowledge to a particular body of students, education courses are often seen to lack rigor, be impractical, segmented and lacking a clear direction (Tom, 1997). However, professional programs such as law, nursing, engineering and social work also struggle to align theory to practice and make the curriculum of their professional programs inform the needs of the their professions (Hargreaves, 2003).

Implicit within teacher education programs is a taken for granted notions of learning as dualistic, from a Cartesian separation of the mind from the matter. In this way thinking is seen as existing inside the head and separate from the context of its application. This dualistic notion in teacher education implies a tendency to think of persons and situations as independent leading to a pre-programming of pre-service teachers with techniques and content to teach. Preparation for practice then implies filling up pre-service teachers with useful tips and tools to teach somewhat like programming a robot to be a teacher. However, as concluded by Barab and Plucker (2002) from a contemporary review on thinking about learning (referring to ecological psychology, situated cognition, distributed cognition, activity theory, and legitimate peripheral participation) what is missing in education is a language system to describe learning for persons-in-situations. What is needed is an integrated system where teaching ability is part of the individual–environment transaction. However, this does not mean an apprenticeship of learning, though learning from a more experienced colleague is needed. Teacher education is far more complex a process than copying what has been done before by experienced teachers. Pre-service teachers need to apply technical skills in the classroom but at the same time they need to adapt these skills as they reflect on their learning. Many years ago Dewey (1904) warned us against separating knower from known when it comes to educating teachers.

On the one hand, we may carry on the practical work with the object of giving teachers in training working command of the necessary tools of their profession; control of the technique of class instruction and management; skill and proficiency in the work of teaching. . . . On the other hand, we may propose to use practice work as an instrument in making real and vital theoretical instruction; the knowledge of subject-matter and of principles of education. . . . [However] to place emphasis upon the securing of proficiency in teaching and discipline puts the attention of the student-teacher in the wrong place, tends to fix it in the wrong direction. . . . Such persons seem to know how to teach, but they are not students of teaching. (p. 15)

So we need to prepare teachers to become students of teaching without simply giving them the tools of teaching, though these need to be learned, and without simply putting them in a practical setting to learn on the job, though they need such experiences to learn how to teach. What we need is a way of systematically and recursively-developing skills from contexts, refined and studied in classes, which are actively developed and adapted by the teachers through a continuous process of becoming a student of teaching.

Within this paper we discuss three innovations we have connected by a commitment to develop students of teaching. We believe these innovations have started to disrupt the traditional frame of reference for teacher education and the traditional university education process. These initiatives are (1) School Integrated Teacher Education, (2) Electronic Portfolios, and (3) Professional seminars. These initiatives have been developed in attempts to

create situated and cohesive teacher education programs rather than a series of discrete individual experiences leading to teacher certification. These initiatives have developed both separately and together as core elements of our “program” that embed elements of critical features noted in teacher education research described over the past two decades (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Korthagen, Loughran, & Russell, 2006). Before we explain these initiatives we will frame the context of these initiatives by first defining our sense of teacher education programs and then outline specific details on our own teacher education program at the University of Victoria.

### **Defining Teacher Education Programs**

Teacher education is still often referred to as “teacher training”, reinforcing the centrality of learning from experienced teachers in an apprenticeship type of model. In this model, novices learn techniques related to classroom management, lesson planning and testing. Current teacher education programs attempt to address broader perspectives of education, including issues of equity and social justice, but are expected to prepare new teachers to survive the complex and multiple demands of running a classroom. Although receiving courses in historical and foundational discourses, theories of child and adolescent learning, studies of pedagogy, inquiry into school structures and procedures, pre-service teachers and practicing teachers still expect the focus to be on “practical” and immediate issues of presenting managed and controlled lessons that address commonly understood skills and knowledge.

The idea of teacher education is a means to transcend the hegemonic normal school orientation of teacher training and the bifurcation of theory and practice or school life versus university life. The field of teacher education then, needs to be rooted in theories of adult learning and too, the ethic of academic freedom that underscores university education and provides the future of the teaching profession with a model of learning needed for democratic, cosmopolitan societies. As Britzman (2007) suggests, there needs to be, in the field of teacher education, a commitment to university education; school life is to be studied in such a way that its history and current emphasis is considered as complex and changing rather than as compliance and as adaptation. The field of teacher education, then, must make an interpretive turn, allowing for theories of conflict and change, and for debate and new discourses that contribute to the psychological and emotional maturity of those learning to teach. Pre-service teachers need a place to study, to become students of teaching (Dewey, 1904) as they engage in the realities of teaching.

#### ***Place of “Field Experience” in Teacher Education***

Agreeing with Russell (2001), there is no disputing the centrality or importance of field experiences in teacher education programs, however we believe that the nature of field experiences and the role they play in the development of new teachers’ learning needs to be problematized for a number of pragmatic and philosophical reasons. Firstly, if everything of importance is learned in a school site and not at a university, then the future of teacher education programs located in universities is in serious jeopardy. Secondly, following an apprenticeship model of learning from “masters” on the job will maintain current (often

traditional) classroom practices but leaves little room for trying alternative practices. Thirdly, school structures do not generally provide the time or space for teachers to reflect on their practice, consider alternative theoretical or practice-based approaches, or to involve others in their thinking about teaching. Hence there is a default to learning “on the job”, ignoring or actively negating alternative theories and strategies offered in teacher education programs. What is needed is a way of acknowledging the important person-in-situation learning afforded by field experience whilst maintain the capacity to become students of teaching. As Dewey (1904) instructs us

Practical work should be pursued primarily with reference to its reaction upon the professional pupil in making him [sic] a thoughtful and alert student of education, rather than to help him get immediate proficiency. For immediate skill may be got at the cost of power to go on growing. . . . Such persons seem to know how to teach, but they are not students of teaching. (1904, p. 15)

### **The Teacher Education Program at the University of Victoria**

Over the past several years, the teacher education program at University of Victoria has been systematically attempting to develop a “programmatically” approach to teacher education, interweaving school-based experiences with campus-based experiences in integral and intentional ways. There have been significant challenges to developing “programmatically” thinking. Generally, instructors in teacher education programs are not positioned to think programmatically; instead, we think from our vantage point, i.e., language arts instructor, educational psychology instructor, practicum supervisor, etc. Our thinking revolves around our areas of expertise and our perspective on teacher education programs. Currently, our programs consist of between 16 and 25 discrete courses, and faculty members and a rotating pool of sessional instructors teach these courses intermittently (note, this is not a significantly different model from most teacher education programs in Canada). Considerable effort must go into coordinating meetings between the different instructors teaching in the program, and even more effort goes into sharing common goals and philosophies about education. This model does not lend itself to enabling instructors to think in connected, integrated, and programmatic ways. Only those responsible for program oversight might be able to see opportunities for connections and networking, and depending on institutional structures, might or might not have opportunities to take advantage of potential connections.

The word “program” also needs consideration if we are considering a pedagogically developed set of integrated and developmental set of learning experiences. The various dictionary definitions provide different understandings, including: a) a listing of the order of events to take place or procedures to be followed; a schedule; a system of services, opportunities, or projects b) a curricular plan or system of academic and related activities (<http://www.answers.com/topic/program>). A clearer consideration of what is meant by “program” would help in shaping a meaningful set of interrelated experiences that lead to meaningful preparation of critical scholarly pragmatic thinkers and problem-solvers to engage in teaching. As such a program is more than a list of courses. The sequence of courses, the progression of field experiences, the ability to communicate between courses, field experiences

and cohorts of pre-service teachers, and the ability to genuinely acknowledge and celebrate becoming a teacher all serve to create a coherent program.

It is within and in between these structures, then, that our attempts to create a sense of cohesive programming have been located. A program where pre-service teachers can become students of teaching through course and programmatically integrated field and course experiences, self-assessment through continuous and mentored reflection on their learning and professional seminars set up to educate them as adult learners ready to embrace and evolve the teaching profession.

### ***School Integrated Teacher Education and Situated Learning***

School integrated teacher education (SITE) refers to the systematic incorporation of school experiences into the teaching and learning of core concepts within university courses. Throughout our five-year research program, Hopper and Sanford (2008) focused on investigating how SITE courses realize a social theory of learning (Wenger, 1998). We have engaged pre-service teachers in regular and focused field experiences in local schools; these field experiences are intended to connect and integrate new learning about teaching in school/classroom sites. We believe that SITE courses also offer a basis for sustained professional development in teaching. SITE courses create partnerships between schoolteachers, university instructors, and pre-service teachers that lead to enriching learning environments, teacher development, and educational projects with global impact.

The SITE courses have included Language Arts methods courses, Physical Education (PE) methods courses and seminar classes. In SITE courses, pre-service teachers participate in lessons taught in local schools as a fundamental part of learning course content. In PE methods courses the university instructors teach whole classes of school children, with the whole class of pre-service teachers observing and then gradually taking over the teaching of PE lessons in the school; in Language Arts methods classes, classroom teachers model their practice before giving pre-service teachers an opportunity to teach their classes of children on their own. In the seminar classes pre-service teachers visit schools as part of course requirements to observe how schools and classrooms function and to assist teachers. Staff and principals from schools in the SITE project have met regularly with course instructors and the group of instructors have meet on a regular basis.

A key idea behind the SITE courses is the concept of situated learning or situativity (Barab & Plucker, 2002). As Lave and Wenger (1991) describe, situated learning occurs as the learner moves from legitimate participation at the periphery of the community of practitioners toward more and more central participation. Situated learning is “more encompassing in intent than conventional notions of ‘learning in situ’ or ‘learning by doing,’” and as such we are trying to understand learning to teach “that is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.31). This approach highlights the power of socially situated learning within communities of practice focused on the learning of children in schools. By working in reflective communities anchored to school sites, pre-service teachers learn about self-as-teacher as an integral and inseparable aspect of the social practice of the school. As such the school context creates an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge about teaching that provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of teacher knowledge.

The SITE courses develop intersecting communities of practice between pre-service teachers, university instructors and schoolteachers. This intersection connects to Wenger’s

(1998) theory of communities of practice, in particular, her following four dimensions for the design of learning:

1. A tension between participation (a process of taking part; suggests action and connection) and reification (a way to convey meaning for procedures, routines or practices such as lesson planning).
2. A tension between identification (process through which modes of belonging – to teaching profession -- become constitutive of our identities by creating bonds) and negotiability (ability, facility, and legitimacy to contribute to, take responsibility for, and shape meanings that matter within a social configuration).
3. A tension between structures that are the designed (systematic, planned, and reflexive colonization of time and space in the service of an undertaking) and the emergent (structures that are adaptable, neither inherently stable or unstable, but that remain the same unless action taken to cause change).
4. An interaction between the local (community) and global (society), where local and global are related levels of participation that always coexist and shape each other, where knowledge is not just a matter of local regimes of competence but dependent also on the orientation of these practices within broader constellations...knowing in practice involves an interaction between the local and the global.

Several papers we have published on this approach speak to the power of person-learning-in-situation within spaces to reflect then return to learn again. For example, understanding the complexities of being a teacher in relation to issues of socio-cultural issues such as poverty, race and gender (Hopper & Sanford, 2004); ability to augment pre-service teachers perceived ability, confidence and attitude to teach a subject area (Hopper, Brown, & Rhodes, 2005); the capacity to use previous generation of graduate teachers reflections to prepare and enhance “new” pre-service teachers learning experience and sense of confidence (Hopper & Sanford, 2008); and finally, the ability to create genuine partnerships with schools that can enhance school curriculum and empower instructors, teachers and students to reach out and support children in war-torn countries (Sanford & Hopper, 2006).

It was these experiences and ongoing reports from pre-service teachers that expressed gratitude for such experiences, but frustration at not being able to value such situated learning at the university that led to the next initiative.

### ***Electronic-Portfolios and Selecting Experiences of Becoming a Teacher***

Professional electronic-portfolios encourage pre-service teachers to think more deeply about teaching and content, be more conscious of theories and assumptions that guide their practice, and engage in collaborative dialogues about their teaching. Within a teacher education program electronic portfolios (ePortfolios) also offer the potential for a more deliberate and cumulative improvement of teacher education programs (Anderson & DeMeulle, 1998). By starting an ePortfolio we sought to discover how an evolving electronic portfolio process (multi-media storage and retrieval of electronic learning evidence), developed within our teacher education program, can allow pre-service teachers to selectively and systematically collect evidence on

their learning that developed their capacity to study themselves becoming teachers as it created a self-renewing system for both individual and programmatic insight on pre-service teacher learning in the program. In this way we understood learning as a complex process that happens organically based on what a person has previously learned and that a program becomes a system that learns as the students and teachers as agents in the system inter-act and adapt to the challenges of teaching. Therefore, understanding learning as an adaptive, emergent and self-organizing process we have created, over a five year period, an ongoing, formatively assessed by seminar instructors, ePortfolio, where pre-service teachers collect evidence of their learning in program experiences and related life experiences that show how they address competencies to be certified as a teacher.

Our ePortfolio process is creating, as noted by Carter & Doyle (1996) and Grossman (2005) about ePortfolios, a way of renewing teacher education programs and creating new spaces for teacher and program development. As these authors note:

- The e-portfolio development process addresses criticisms of fragmentations by creating a space for instructors to participate in the whole education of their pre-service teachers.
- The eportfolio creates a pedagogical space for pre-service teachers and instructor to delve deeply into their participation in courses and field experiences, focusing on self as learner while at the same time attending to the learning needs of children they encounter.
- The eportfolio counters grading practices at university focus the teacher candidate on how to be a good student and get a high mark rather than how the course experience has helped them develop as teachers. The e-portfolio values pre-service teachers' personal experience; it encourages them to develop their own theories on learning as they develop teacher knowledge that integrates professional knowledge with contextual experiences.

However, adoption of e-portfolios is fraught with challenges associated with paradigm shifts in assessment not well received by instructors or pre-service teachers (Barrett & Knezek, 2003), technology challenges that are not adequately supported by traditional programs, and time to create an e-portfolio effectively that effectively supports pre-service teacher development within intense programs (Wetzel & Strudler, 2005). As noted in our recent publications transforming how we understand learning in teacher education programs and disrupting the controlling power of the grade is not without resistance from both the use of technology and the need to reflect about your learning as a teacher not as a student (Hopper & Sanford, 2010; Hopper, Sanford, Filler, Krawetz, & Madill, 2008).

Agreeing with the research we have found that the ePortfolio has become a tool for deep and durable learning, supportive of environments of reflection and collaboration that are particularly effective for bringing about performance and learning-related change (Barrett & Knezek, 2003). Increasingly we are finding as noted in the literature that the ePortfolio is encouraging deeper learning through the use of multi-media artifacts that offer richer forms of literacy to express understanding (Lambert, DePaepe, Lambert, & Anderson, 2007; Stansberry & Kymes, 2007). Through our experiences over the past five years with programmatic ePortfolios, we have recognized ways that they enable connections:

- of theoretical and experience-based knowledge; recognizing learning as a complex social process
- between pre-service teachers, their field experience supervisors, and their mentor teachers
- of one course to another, of a course to field experience
- between pre-service teachers and seminar instructors

By examining the pedagogical structures created by an e-portfolio process we have observed how ePortfolios have the capacity to enable pre-service teachers to systematically think about their teaching across courses as they develop a coherent identity as teacher and student of teaching. EPortfolios allow pre-service teachers to reflect on content, become more conscious of theories and assumptions that guide their practice, and help them to engage in collaborative dialogues about their teaching. Of particular note is the process of an exit interview at the end of our elementary and middle school programs. On these occasions, pre-service teachers complete program requirements by engaging in a mock interview in front of panel containing of an instructor, school principal and/or teacher and seminar leader. At these exit interviews pre-service teachers refer to their ePortfolio to address typical job interview questions. Continuously interview panels are blown away by the pre-service teachers give especially when they effortlessly draw on evidence fro learning experiences from practicums, courses or life experiences. Often the emotion behind pre-service teachers stories speaks to the ability of a teacher to make a difference to a child, to affect change in a community and to inspire others to become teachers.

***Professional Seminars in a Teacher Education Program:  
Connectedness and Cohesiveness***

Over that last five years the professional seminars, approximately 20-25% of any program in our teacher education programs, focus on “teacher knowledge”, which is *complex, practical, situated, and personal*. It is complex due to the nature of teaching where understandings, intuition, appraisal of situations, adjustment, and improvisation are constantly called upon (Schön, 1983). Teacher knowledge is oriented toward practice, the need to know what do, how to do it, how to manage. Teacher knowledge is situated in practice, developed in practice, and ultimately develops practice and it is personal, reflecting individual teachers’ biography, values, knowledge, and experiences in a school context (Munby, et al., 2001).

Professional Teacher Education seminars focus on the *why and how* of teaching, in specific contexts (*where*), rather than the *what and how* of teaching that is the domain of curriculum, foundations, and psychology courses. We recognize that in postsecondary education, we are working with *adult learners* and we draw on theoretical understandings from professional adult and Aboriginal cultural education in order to best address the needs of our students. Additionally, professional seminars provide a space for pre-service teachers to develop a sense of life-long learning rather than life-long schooling, hence moving away from focusing on pedagogy as it relates to children in relation to our work with students in post-secondary education and towards the use of “adult learning”, to more clearly distinguish between the teaching of children and the teaching of adults.



Principles of Adult Learning that shape the professional seminars include the following:

- Adults are autonomous and self-directed; they need to be actively involved in the learning process and engaged in problem-based learning.
- Adults have accumulated a foundation of life experiences and knowledge; they need to connect learning to teach to this knowledge/experience base.
- Adults are goal-oriented; they need to be shown how the class/program will help them attain their goals, i.e., becoming a teacher.
- Adults are relevancy-oriented; learning must be applicable to their work, i.e., theories and concepts must be related to settings recognizable to participants.
- Adults are practical, focusing on the aspects of courses most useful to them in their work.
- Adults (as all learners) need to be shown respect, treated as equals in experience and knowledge and allowed to voice their opinions.

In order to provide motivation to the adult learner, professional seminar instructors recognize several sources of motivation for adult learning, including social relationships, external expectations, social welfare, personal career development, and cognitive interest.

In professional seminars in our Teacher Education programs, we have identified the need for:

- identity development, articulation of who you are and what you know;
- fostering spirit of inquiry;
- drawing together contextual and theoretical knowledge and understandings;
- examining and practicing *teacher* role;
- developing a critical stance to experiences, theories, and observations;
- learning to think like a teacher and act like a teacher; place teachers' actions in a pedagogically oriented framework;
- recognizing and understanding what they do know and how to draw upon prior learning in teaching situations; recognizing what they do not know, and what they are thinking about what they do not know they do not know; to uncover this and work out a plan, direction, or approach to move them to developing a pedagogy and pedagogically grounded plan/way forward;
- managing complexity; four elements of complexity identified by Lampert (2001, cited by Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 307):
  - teaching is never routine
  - teaching has multiple goals that must be addressed simultaneously
  - teaching is done in relationship to diverse groups of students
  - teaching requires multiple kinds of knowledge to be integrated.

As noted by Darling-Hammond (2006), we frame seminars as “Learning *about* practice *in* practice, in settings that ...create strong connections between theory and practice” (p. 287).

In professional seminars, we develop learning communities through which our pre-service teachers can feel safe, take risks, and explore deeply their own personal/professional

values and assumptions. We sequence our pre-service teachers' experiences based on professional knowledge about creating experiences and environments that best support novices as they learn to become teachers. As continuous assessors of the electronic portfolio instructors of professional seminars connect to pre-service teachers ongoing experience of the program through reflective entries on their learning. Instructors draw on and draw together knowledge found in multiple disciplines, professional discipline knowledge connected to theories about learning, assessment, development, and management of learning environments, in order to provide the most opportunities for success for the most children and youth possible.

For example, in our Elementary four-year B.Ed. program, we offer a carefully developed sequence of professional seminar experiences:

- *Year 2 Professional Seminar* (ED-P 250) – examining role of teacher through experiences of gradually becoming a teacher in teaching and learning environment (schools, community); drawing on multiple disciplines, professional discipline knowledge connected to theories about learning, assessment, development, management of learning environment
- *Year 3 Professional Seminar* (ED-P 350) – in addition to cycling back to experiences in ED-P 250, addressing diversity in the classroom, based on experiences and contexts experienced, drawing on ability, culture, race, gender, etc.; examine how we understand the systems we look at that enable/dis-able learners; beginning to develop inquiry stance
- *Year 4 Professional Role and Teacher Leadership* (ED-P 410) – drawing from previous practicum and course-based learning experiences in the program, addresses contemporary professional issues and the role of the ethical, reflective and active practitioner within inclusive school communities; focuses on leading for learning, collaboration, and critical inquiry as central components of teaching in a democratic society
- *Year 4 Inquiry* (ED-P 490) – professional inquiry, providing a transition from pre-service educator to professional educator; building on prior program experiences and assignments, pre-service teacher develop areas they have identified as important as important for their readiness as beginning teachers, drawing on e-portfolio artifacts and reflection to help them identify and develop a final professional inquiry project.

These seminar classes integrate field experiences, both in schools and in communities connected to teaching and learning (i.e., community centres, nature reserves, adult learning centres), with the study of teaching drawing on texts such as Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (2008) and full-text articles selected by instructors and students. The courses take responsibility for guiding the students to collectively and individually develop their ePortfolios, allowing them to select separate bodies of knowledge from courses and their lives to address the competencies to be a teacher. These common aspects of seminars created a connectedness in our program that allows pre-service teachers' diverse experiences to dialogically feed each others' growth as they continuous study teaching from their own and others' experiences of learning. Educational philosopher Maxine Greene (1986) denounces preoccupations with

individual growth that do not involve dialogic and inquiry processes. Instead, she argues that “connectedness is required, an overcoming of passivity, a capacity to notice what lies around us, and a commitment to the constitution of what might be called a common world” (p. 74). It is this connectedness that makes the seminars critical for a cohesive program.

## **Conclusion**

These experiences have led us to believe in several foundational principles for teacher education programs to address program fragmentation, dualistic learning and to develop a life-long attitude of becoming a student of teaching:

1. We believe that connectedness is critical to allowing meaningful learning to become embodied, used and adapted by teachers.
2. We believe that pre-service teachers’ ownership of their learning is critical to enhancing the influence of the teacher education program.
3. We believe that technology can offer an infrastructure to value personal and connected learning by creating an effective means to document and analyze our legitimate engagement in the complex interplay of persons, activities, and ideas as we shift from teacher to student (Lave, 1991).
4. We believe that teacher education programs need to create organizational structures that allow cross-course and cross-field experiences, between instructors and between students’ open communication and sharing.
5. We believe that field experiences need to be developed within the program not as a test of being a teacher, but as an experience that transforms the pre-service teacher as they inquire into learning, student/teacher relations and role of education in society.

The idea of connectedness means that pre-service teachers learn from the experiences that they have as a diverse group of individuals committed to becoming students of teaching. This commitment arises from personal choice that is informed by field experience opportunities offered by instructors to evoke pre-service teachers’ self-awareness, critical engagement with the realities they experience, and the imagination to become a teacher who can make a difference. As field experiences are seen as transformative, as pre-service teachers connect through ePortfolio to each other’s and their own experiences, and as seminar offers a space to critically reflect on the process of becoming a teacher, we hold out hope for developing teacher education that moves from preparation to a genuine inquiry in renewing education for the twenty-first century.

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# Chapter 21

## *Towards Equity for Internationally Educated Teachers in Teacher Education Field Experiences*

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*This chapter explores how equity issues have been prioritized in the field experience portion of an academic and professional bridging program to support internationally educated teachers (IETs) in obtaining K-12 certification in Manitoba. Discussion and analysis is framed within a critical pedagogy seeking to diversify the Canadian teaching force to better reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of student populations and to promote the professional development and integration of diverse teachers who can address the needs of diverse learners and their families. Facilitating IETs' field experiences reveal four main dimensions of an equity-oriented approach: customization of school placements to showcase IETs' strengths, a focus on formative assessment, the use of discomfort as a learning tool, and advocacy among university and school-based partners. Equity to support IET integration in schools is usefully explored through ongoing critical research including methodologies such as critical ethnography and critical participatory action research. Examples of how these research approaches have been used to investigate the contributions of IETs in Manitoba schools are provided, and implications for teacher education programming and research are addressed.*

The field experience portion of Canadian teacher education programs is often fraught with contradictions, with teacher candidates seeking to reconcile the ideas and demands of their university coursework with classroom environments, faculty advisors and collaborating teachers negotiating contentious roles as mentors and gatekeepers, and teacher education researchers debating the effectiveness of various types of field experiences using a variety of methodologies. These issues become even more complex when considering the experiences and contexts of internationally educated teachers (IETs) seeking to re-certify in Canada. Tensions abound for IETs who, while possibly new to the cultures and contexts of Canadian classrooms, are by no means new to the teaching profession itself, often bringing between two and twenty or more years of experience from international settings among other extensive qualifications, knowledge, and skills (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009; Schmidt, in press). In turn, IET program providers are left to grapple with questions such as how can IETs' experiences and contributions be valued in Canadian educational contexts? What principles should guide field experiences for IETs as they prepare to resume their careers in Canada? How might lessons learned from the field experiences of IETs from an academic and professional bridging program in Manitoba inform other teacher education programs? What

research methodologies are most appropriate to document the impact IETs make in schools? These are the questions that guide this paper, aligned with an equity agenda that aims to diversify the Canadian teaching force to better reflect K-12 student populations (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006).

Analysis and discussion are grounded in critical theory and pedagogy, challenging the deficit paradigm that underpins much of the current educational discourse on cultural and linguistic diversity (Cummins, 2003), particularly as it relates to the teaching profession (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009). To illustrate how equity and diversity can be made more central to teacher education field experiences, I draw on examples from an academic and professional bridging program (hereafter referred to as the IET Program) to support internationally educated teachers in obtaining Manitoba certification. After providing a brief program overview, I explain how the school placements facilitated for IETs have attempted to challenge some of the boundaries and expectations associated with the practicum experiences traditionally afforded Bachelor of Education candidates in the same institution. I then show how critical research methodologies including critical ethnography and critical participatory action research can be used to investigate the impact of IETs' diverse perspectives, experiences, and approaches in Canada's multilingual, multicultural schools. Finally, I address implications at the level of teacher education research and practice.

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

Critical pedagogy, defined broadly as “a perspective toward education that is concerned with questions of justice, democracy, and ethical claims” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 7) is recognized as an important approach for realizing an equity agenda in teacher education. Without it, teacher education curricula can be reduced to checklists of transmission-oriented skills that serve to reproduce existing educational and social structures and their inherent power imbalances that privilege certain ways of knowing and marginalize others. The danger in a “nuts and bolts”, skills-oriented approach to teacher development is that

this practical focus far too often occurs without examining teachers' own assumptions, values, and beliefs and how this ideological posture informs, often unconsciously, their perceptions and actions when working with linguistic minority and other politically, socially, and economically subordinated students. (Bartolomé, 2004, p. 97)

Such questioning of values by teachers in mainstream educational settings is important not only in pre-service teacher education classes as Bartolomé's discussion supports, but also for field partners when considering the objective of helping IETs access a predominantly white, middle-class, Canadian-born teaching force. The participants in the IET Program are marginalized on the basis of being immigrant professionals with internationally obtained credentials which are systemically devalued, and they face additional discrimination as speakers of English as an additional language or additional dialect and in some cases as non-whites (Schmidt, in press). Confronting teachers and administrators in the field with issues of privilege and deliberately challenging mainstream practices that are racist and exclusionary are central



activities in the IET Program (see the following section on advocacy under “Field Experiences for IETs”).

Darling-Hammond (2006) shares characteristics of effective field experiences that offer further insights for the equity-oriented approach the IET Program attempts to foster. In addition to better preparing teachers for the diverse learner populations prevalent in K-12 schools, Darling-Hammond also recommends that programs

include tight coherence and integration among courses and between course work and clinical work in schools, extensive and intensively supervised clinical work integrated with course work using pedagogies that link theory and practice, and closer, proactive relationships with schools that serve diverse learners effectively and develop and model good teaching. (p. 300)

While all three of the above recommendations have value for the IET Program, the most salient in the context of the current discussion is the need to establish close relationships with schools in which diversity is seen as an asset and diverse learners’ needs are effectively met. IETs have important contributions to make as role models for learners from diverse backgrounds and can also serve as important cultural and linguistic resources for these students, their families, and the wider school community (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009). IETs’ resources and contributions are most fruitfully employed in school environments where they are recognized and valued as part of a wider affirmation of diversity and difference.

### **The Academic and Professional Bridging Program for IETs at the University of Manitoba**

In 2006 the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba launched an academic and professional bridging program to support uncertified or provisionally certified IETs (i.e., those requiring at least 30 credit hours of university coursework) in meeting Manitoba certification requirements. IETs have internationally obtained teaching credentials and experience, with teachers from India, the Philippines, and Ukraine representing Manitoba’s largest groups of IETs.<sup>1</sup> The rationale for the program was premised on notions of advocacy and sustainability; not only can internationally educated teachers contribute in terms of reflecting the diversity evident K-12 schools, but if they are recruited to immigrate on the basis of extensive professional qualifications and backgrounds then they should be facilitated in contributing to that profession (Schmidt, Young, & Mandzuk, in press).

The program in its current form involves education and teachable subject coursework (exact courses are determined by the needs of individual IETs), an orientation to the Manitoba curriculum, English language development, professional development opportunities, employment search skills, and in-school placements that incorporate mentoring by experienced teachers in Winnipeg schools. This field experience component is significant because previously it was uncommon to require IETs to complete school experiences as part of the re-

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<sup>1</sup> Of the 26 IETs who have participated in the academic and professional bridging program since 2006, seven have been from India, six from Ukraine, and five from the Philippines, with the remainder from Romania, Russia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Croatia.

certification process; the assumption often prevailed that practicum placements were redundant for teachers with years of prior classroom experience. When establishing the IET Program, this assumption was challenged on the basis that recent and local classroom experience was essential for IETs to both learn about the cultures of Manitoba schools and to establish important networks for employment purposes. Thus, a twelve-week, 9-credit-hour practicum component became central to the 30-credit-hour program design.

### **Field Experiences for IETs**

Field experiences for the 600 Bachelor of Education students enrolled in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba are arranged through a central School Experiences Office and where possible reflect the grade levels and subject specializations the teacher candidates are preparing to teach. B.Ed. candidates are formally evaluated at the conclusion of each of the four, six-week practice teaching blocks they complete in their 60-credit-hour program, with possible evaluations consisting of ‘failure’, ‘marginal pass’, or ‘pass’. In designing the field experiences for IETs, a different approach has been adopted, made possible in part because the number of students in the IET Program is significantly smaller than the B.Ed. student population. The IET Program Coordinator is responsible for identifying appropriate school placements for IETs, and specific schools and teachers are invited to participate and host IETs in a series of three practicum placements (one 2-week placement and two 5-week placements). School division liaisons who serve as part of the IET Program Advisory Committee often help in suggesting possible placements. These placements have been unique in that they have been highly customized to suit the needs of individual IETs, they have emphasized formative assessment over summative evaluation until the final placement, they have deliberately moved IETs and collaborating teachers out of their comfort zones to challenge their assumptions and worldviews, and they have involved advocacy to help address issues of systemic discrimination prevalent in schools. Each of these areas is addressed in more detail below.

#### ***Customization***

One of the central ideas underpinning the selection of school placements for the IETs has been the recognition that “one-size-doesn’t-fit-all”; that IETs have a range of strengths, interests, and needs, and the field experiences provided need to cater to these differences. A number of examples illustrate how IETs’ diverse needs have been addressed as part of the field experiences in the IET Program. For instance, in one practice teaching block, an IET with a background in and a passion for school administration was paired not with a collaborating teacher as would typically be the case but instead worked directly with a principal who was the sole administrator of a small, multi-grade, multi-age elementary school. This partnership enabled the IET to gain experience leading a diverse school community in Manitoba, and the benefits were reciprocal, with the principal appreciating the input and assistance from an IET who was an experienced colleague with insights to share from her work in an international context.

In another example, an IET with a background in Industrial Arts and Physical Education was partnered with not one but three collaborating teachers within the context of a single teaching block, enabling him to experience teaching in multiple subject areas offered across the curriculum of a large urban high school. Such a partnership may counter the “one novice teacher to one experienced teacher” ratio that tends to prevail in many traditional practicum arrangements, and yet for this IET, the variety was invaluable. He was able to gain familiarity with the culturally-based Industrial Arts and Physical Education curricula in Manitoba, which was particularly important considering that the equipment and sports featured in these disciplines vary considerably from one country (and possibly even one region or school division) to another. Further, working across departments afforded him the chance to become better known and appreciated for his contributions by more students and staff members in the school.

A common theme that emerges from these two examples is that IETs differ not only from one another in their professional development needs but they also differ significantly from many B.Ed. candidates who may be novices to teaching. Consequently, designing appropriate field experiences for IETs requires careful thinking about what types of experiences are most valuable for both the IETs and the school communities in which they work; the most beneficial arrangements may not be the traditional, structured, “novice-mentor” relationships featured in many pre-service programs. Customizing the field experiences for IETs has facilitated the types of proactive school relationships that Darling-Hammond (2006) advocates, and moreover has enabled IETs to showcase their unique strengths and contributions in a profession that tends to value conformity and homogeneity (Kincheloe, 2008).

### ***Assessment***

Assessing IETs’ field experiences has also involved adopting alternate strategies than those used in the B.Ed. practicum at the University of Manitoba. Instead of receiving a summative evaluation at the conclusion of every teaching block, the IETs receive extensive formative feedback and a summative evaluation only at the conclusion of the final practicum. This revised approach removes some of the pressure traditionally associated with high-stakes practice teaching and instead allows for a focus on risk-taking in a safe environment and professional development over an extended period of time. This opportunity to learn and grow in a deliberately paced manner, while arguably necessary for all teachers, is especially important for IETs who may be functioning in a second, third, or fourth language and new to the contexts and cultures of Canadian schools.

While the field experiences designed for IETs attempt to differentiate what might be meaningful for these unique individuals and respond accordingly, in some cases maintaining elements of the traditional practicum becomes important. One example would be the assessment tool used to document aspects of IETs’ performance in the schools. The content of the standard tool used for B.Ed. candidates has been adapted to address certain cultural biases (e.g., additional information has been provided to faculty advisors, collaborating teachers, and hiring personnel to help them understand that “assertiveness” may be perceived and practiced differently across various cultural contexts) and to reflect the fact that IETs are experienced teachers in a new setting rather than novice teachers. However, the tool has remained consistent with the B.Ed. assessment document in its overall format and appearance,

to recognize that potential employers are familiar with this document and expect to see it more or less in its standard form when they assess a teaching applicant's professional portfolio. This expectation was articulated by hiring personnel who sit on the IET Program Advisory Committee. If the document had been changed altogether, it could have inadvertently disadvantaged IETs in their employment search, thereby diminishing rather than strengthening the equity agenda of the program. Given that IETs already fare far worse in the hiring process when compared with Canadian-born applicants (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009), any decisions that could potentially affect employability need to be carefully considered.

### ***Discomfort as a Learning Tool***

Employing discomfort as a learning tool is prevalent in a variety of critical teacher education contexts (Johnson, 1995; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005) where teachers are encouraged to take risks in engaging with issues (e.g., intercultural communication or white privilege) that may be unfamiliar and/or disruptive to their previously held assumptions and beliefs. Supporting and scaffolding teachers as they shift beyond their comfort zones is a professional development strategy that has been used in the field experiences component of the IET Program in two main ways. First, the IETs have been challenged to take risks by experiencing, in at least one of their practicum placements, school environments, grade levels, and subject areas that were previously unfamiliar to them. For example, IETs who worked as subject specialists in high schools in their home countries have had the opportunity to plan and implement a multi-subject, integrated curriculum for early years students. Likewise, IETs whose previous teaching experience consisted of teaching grade one have had the chance to work with older adolescents. Offering IETs new field experiences in this manner has been premised on the goal of helping IETs access the profession more readily upon completion of the program. They are more likely to be successful in obtaining teaching positions if they can provide evidence of their abilities to take risks and be flexible in a competitive job market, where school administrators are looking for teachers who can contribute broadly to an entire school community and not merely succeed in teaching a single class of students in a limited range of subject areas.

The second way in which discomfort is utilized as a learning tool in the field experiences portion of the IET Program is through the professional development provided to collaborating teachers who host IETs in their classrooms, school administrators from the schools where IETs complete their practice teaching, and faculty advisors who supervise the IETs on practicum. These partners are regularly brought together to debrief their perceptions and experiences of working with IETs in the field and to learn about issues such as systemic racism and the privilege afforded to dominant groups in the education field. While these professional conversations are necessarily difficult, they also yield many positive benefits by helping teachers recognize some of the main barriers impeding IET integration in the Manitoba teaching profession and exploring ways that various stakeholders can begin to challenge some of the problematic discourses and practices in their own environments.

### ***Advocacy***

Related to the idea of shifting field partners outside of their comfort zones to explore difficult issues is the advocacy that underpins the IET Program's work in and with the wider teaching

profession and immigrant-serving organizations in Manitoba and beyond. A variety of settings (e.g., Faculty of Education events, local and national teachers' and administrators' conferences, information sessions for immigrant professionals) have provided venues to challenge the difference as deficit (Cummins, 2003) paradigm that continues to marginalize immigrant teachers and to ensure that IET integration is framed within the context of the larger systemic issues that limit access and opportunities for new Canadian teachers. For example, a presentation to the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents allowed IET Program representatives to share the benefits of hiring IETs, and superintendents in attendance who had IET Program graduates working in their divisions offered further evidence of the contributions IETs make to K-12 schools and communities. To accompany and support the community outreach strategy, a professional development DVD and handbook (Schmidt & Block, 2009) was recently developed as a tool to advocate for equity for IETs among education and immigration stakeholders.

### **Research Methodologies to Explore IETs' Contributions to the Field**

A critical, equity-oriented approach to field experiences for IETs is usefully documented and assessed through critical research methodologies. Researchers who combine critical theory and inquiry “question the problematic ways that students are categorized, differences between students are represented, educational purposes are defined, schools are organized, and relationships between communities and schools are developed” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 13). Two of the methodologies that have been used to date to document the impact of IETs in Manitoba schools have been critical ethnography and critical participatory action research.

#### ***Critical Ethnography***

In 2007, a critical ethnography documented and analyzed IETs' and other education stakeholders' perceptions of the issues affecting IET integration (or lack thereof) in K-12 schools in Manitoba (Schmidt, in press). Critical ethnography is defined as “consciously political research with an emancipatory and democratic outlook” (Schmidt, in press, drawing on Goldstein, 2003; Madison, 2005; Quantz, 1992). According to Foley and Valenzuela (2005), researchers who identify themselves as critical ethnographers can fall into three categories: those “who do academic cultural critiques, who write applied policy studies, and who involve themselves directly in political movements” (p. 217). Though all three foci are potentially relevant for examining the field experiences of IETs, this particular critical ethnography of IET stakeholders in Manitoba combined the first and the third areas. The study collected qualitative data in the form of interviews and focus groups with IETs, mentor teachers who hosted IETs in school placements, school division hiring personnel, teacher educators, provincial immigration authorities, and representatives from ethnocultural organizations. Policy and program documents were also collected, and the data was analyzed according to themes, some of which were drawn from the existing literature and some of which emerged as the data was coded.

The study revealed important insights about the roles of IETs in Manitoba classrooms, demonstrating the contributions IETs make to school communities not only by serving as role

models and cultural and linguistic brokers for diverse learners and their families, but by connecting with all learners who have felt themselves at one time or another to be different. The research and subsequent dissemination of the findings sought to challenge the way professionals are constructed in a Canadian education context where anglo-centric norms around accent, dress, and behavior prevail.

### ***Critical Participatory Action Research***

A second methodology that has offered useful insights about the impact IETs make in the field is critical participatory action research. In 2009-2010, a project was undertaken to challenge the marginalization of immigrant teachers in the education system and advance an agenda of sociocultural sustainability, which promotes and affirms not only student diversity but teacher diversity. Like the critical ethnography previously described, this research aimed to challenge anglo-celtic norms prevalent among the Canadian teaching force. Critical participatory action research is concerned with “what people do, how people interact with the world and with others, what people mean and what they value, and the discourses in which people understand and interpret their world” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 565). The critical aspect of the methodology challenged existing inequities that marginalize immigrant teachers in K-12 schools and works toward social change; the participatory dimension ensured that the immigrant teachers have ownership of the research process; and the action research component facilitated sustainable (i.e., ongoing) outcomes that will directly impact the teachers, their professional practices, and the schools and classrooms in which they work.

Six immigrant teachers holding a variety of school-based positions (e.g., full-time teaching positions, substitute or term teaching positions, paraprofessional positions) participated in the project. Data was collected in the form of monthly focus group meetings with the six teachers and journals in which the teachers documented critical incidents and insights related to their professional lives. As one strategy for addressing the power relationships that affected the research process, focus group participants were invited to chair sessions on a rotating basis, with topics for discussion determined by consensus among the teacher participants. This helped to ensure that the research was genuinely participatory and not driven solely by the needs and interests of the principal investigator. While findings from the research are still being analyzed according to a thematic framework, preliminary data echoes the findings from the critical ethnography, suggesting that IETs make numerous positive contributions to the school communities in which they work. These contributions include an ability to respond well in intercultural situations, multilingualism, and rapport with learners and families from diverse backgrounds.

### **Implications**

Returning to the questions asked at the outset of the chapter, the equity-oriented approach to field experiences for IETs at the University of Manitoba generate a number of important implications for teacher education programming. In exploring how IETs’ experiences and contributions can be valued in Canadian educational contexts and guiding principles for field experiences, examples from the IET Program support a customized approach to facilitating

appropriate school placements for IETs, with carefully planned opportunities that both value the prior knowledge of IETs and allow them to ‘stretch’ themselves professionally. The recognition that “one-size-doesn’t-fit-all” for IETs could inform the design and implementation of field experiences for B.Ed. students as well, whereby teacher education programs could consider non-traditional experiences within and outside schools to enhance the professional learning of teacher candidates and prepare them more effectively to meet the needs of diverse communities, as Darling-Hammond (2006) suggests is crucial.

Challenging normative and privileged perspectives in teacher education and advocating for a more equitable approach for IETs is not without its pitfalls. Equity-oriented program development can be impeded when the bureaucrats who fund such programs focus exclusively on issues such as short-term labour market needs and compare IETs unfavourably to internationally educated individuals who work in higher demand professions such as engineering or medicine. Also, the difficult conversations about racism and privilege that necessarily accompany equity-oriented teacher education do not always sit comfortably with the powerbrokers in education, who typically have benefited from the problematic legacy of systemic discrimination that excludes teachers of colour and those with English as an additional language or dialect.

In spite of these challenges, equity for IETs as realized through innovative and critical teacher education practices can be complemented and enhanced by research methodologies to document and analyze the impact IETs make in schools. In this way, the kinds of counter-hegemonic practices Kincheloe (2008) recommends for students can also free teachers “from the indignity of being told who they are and what they should know” (p. 12). Instead, teacher education can move beyond maintaining and replicating existing systemic inequities to help IETs and all teachers “develop their analytical and interpretive abilities, their research skills, their epistemological consciousness, and their sense of identity as empowered democratic citizens” (p. 12-13). In this way, the unique perspectives, knowledge, and skills that IETs offer Canadian educational communities may be affirmed rather than marginalized.

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**Lemisko**

Lynn Lemisko's first teaching experiences, in Alberta, included seven years teaching students in grades four through nine in Calgary and Ft. McMurray and several years of post-secondary teaching of students taking courses in Canadian and European history, the history of education, trends and issues in curriculum development, and social studies curriculum and instruction. While Lynn's research initially concentrated on the history and philosophy of curriculum, teaching, and learning, her work has become increasingly focused on teacher education. Collaborative work with scholars and practitioners interested in exploring promising practices in educating for social justice lead to Lynn's involvement with and investigations into various experiments in pre-service teacher education. Current research includes a study of teacher educator identity and an exploration of ways in which teachers can learn to create a culture of inquiry in schools to enhance early learning. Lynn is also deeply engaged in collaborative work with faculty, teacher candidates and partner school divisions, aimed at renewal of the undergraduate teacher education program at the University of Saskatchewan. She can be reached at [lynn.lemisko@usask.ca](mailto:lynn.lemisko@usask.ca)

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through the integration of ICTs, such as data logging technologies. Other current research addresses the following topics: gender differences in attitude toward science brought about when technologies are integrated in the classroom/laboratory; how New Learners (first year university students) learn with new technologies; and how to improve teacher education through building stronger links between university coursework and the school practicum. Ron is also the lead researcher on a Prince Edward Island Teacher Workload and Worklife study. He can be reached at [rjmacdonald@upei.ca](mailto:rjmacdonald@upei.ca)

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**Nickel**

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### **Ridler**

Olive Ridler has 34 years experience as an educator. She began her career with the Nipissing Board of Education in North Bay, teaching in the secondary panel. In the role of Curriculum Coordinator, Gr. 7-13, she assisted in writing and presenting new programs and curricula at the local and provincial level. Olive spent 14 years in school administration as a vice principal / principal in both the elementary and secondary panels. During this time she was actively involved in administrative positions in the local principals association, including teaching portions of the principal's course. She continued her career with 7 years as a full time assistant professor at Nipissing University, where she taught Curriculum Methods and Observation & Practice Teaching courses with concurrent and consecutive students. She was also a faculty advisor and taught the Senior AQ course during intersession. Olive continues to teach part time at Nipissing as well as to supervise an online ABQ course. She can be reached at [oliver@nipissingu.ca](mailto:oliver@nipissingu.ca)

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### **Russell**

Tom Russell is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at Queen's University. His research focuses on how we learn to teach, with special attention to developing skills of reflective practice and learning from experience. He teaches preservice physics methods, supervises the preservice practicum, and teaches action research in the graduate program. He is particularly interested in the potential of self-study by teacher educators to contribute to the improvement of teacher education. Tom is a co-editor of the *International Handbook on Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices* (Kluwer, 2004) and a co-editor of the journal *Studying Teacher Education: A journal of self-study of teacher education practices*. In 2007 he was appointed for 3 years to a Queen's University Chair in Teaching and Learning. He can be reached at [Tom.Russell@QueensU.ca](mailto:Tom.Russell@QueensU.ca)

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**Sanford**

Kathy Sanford is the Associate Dean Teacher Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria. She is the outgoing President of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE). Her research interests include gender and literacy, alternative literacies, popular culture, and teacher education. She has recently completed a funded research project (CCL) entitled Literacy Learning through Video Games, and has two funded SSHRC projects, involving Gender and Literacy Learning through Videogames, and E-Portfolios in teacher education for individual and programmatic development exploring how teacher education students can be encouraged to take ownership for their learning. She can be reached at [ksanford@uvic.ca](mailto:ksanford@uvic.ca)

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**Sikora**

Following undergraduate work at Notre Dame University, Stefan Sikora received a B.A. in History & Political Science, a B.Ed. (With Distinction) in Social Studies, an M.A. in Native Education, and a Ph.D. in Aboriginal Philosophy, all from the University of Calgary. Stefan also did master's work at the University of Victoria as a Research Fellow in the field of Existential Psychology. Later he was invited to Cambridge University in Great Britain, where he carried out post-doctoral studies in the field of the Philosophy of Education. He has worked as a schoolteacher in both the public and private sectors, and as a college and university lecturer. Stefan is the author/editor of a few academic texts, as well as both published and unpublished books of poetry, novels, essays, and plays. In 1980 his one act play *Clowns* was nominated for a Governor General's Award. Dr. Sikora has been both a keynote speaker and presenter at numerous academic conferences and workshops. Presently he is Associate Professor in the Department of Education and Schooling at Mount Royal University and can be reached at [ssikora@mtroyal.ca](mailto:ssikora@mtroyal.ca)

**Smits**

Hans Smits is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary. He recently completed a five and half year term as Associate Dean responsible for the Faculty's Master of Teaching Program. His research interests include teacher education, hermeneutic inquiry in education, and curriculum theory. He will be retiring from the University of Calgary on June 30, 2011. He can be reached at [hsmits@ucalgary.ca](mailto:hsmits@ucalgary.ca)

**Snart**

Fern Snart will begin her second term as Dean of the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta in July 2010. Her background includes Clinical Psychology and Educational Psychology (Special Education), and she has held several leadership positions, including two Associate Dean portfolios in the Faculty over the past two decades. One area of focus has been the development of a successful Aboriginal Teacher Education program that is delivered



in collaboration with several tribal and provincial colleges to allow students to complete a teaching degree within their home communities. Fern is currently serving as President of the Association of Canadian Deans of Education and will participate in hosting the launch of the Accord on Indigenous Education by the Association of Canadian Deans of Education at CSSE in Montreal, June 1, 2010. Fern can be reached at fern.snart@ualberta.ca

### **Tessaro**

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### **Ward**

Angela Ward taught for 15 years in the British Columbia school system, teaching everything from preschool and kindergarten to Grade 12 English. Since coming to Canada in the 1960s, Angela has had the privilege of working with Aboriginal peoples in school, as undergraduate and graduate students, and as colleagues at the University of Saskatchewan. She has also been involved as a workshop leader in teacher projects in Kazakhstan and Guatemala. Angela's research interests are in teacher education and literacy, especially in cross-cultural settings. She is currently interested in how teachers can engage students in literacy through providing opportunities to learn in multiple ways. With colleagues, Angela is also exploring how teaching as intellectual work is understood by beginning teachers and administrators. Other current work includes a study of how academics in education see themselves as teacher educators. For the past three years her professional and academic work were closely intertwined as she designed and implemented closer connections between academic coursework and field experiences within partnerships with school divisions. She can be reached at [angela.ward@usask.ca](mailto:angela.ward@usask.ca)

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### **Young**

Jon Young is a professor in the Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology at the University of Manitoba. His current research interests include governance issues in teacher education, labour mobility agreements and teacher certification, and public school boards in Canada. Recent publications include, "More than servants of the state: The governance of initial teacher preparation in Canada in an era of school reforms" (forthcoming), *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, Spring 2010 (with Karen Boyd); and "Trading in Education: The Agreement on Internal Trade: Labour mobility and teacher certification in Canada" (2009), *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy (CJEAP)*, Issue #91 (with Dick Henley). He is also co-author (with Ben Levin and Dawn Wallin) of the book *Understanding Canadian Schools: An introduction to educational administration*. He can be contacted at [youngjc@ms.umanitoba.ca](mailto:youngjc@ms.umanitoba.ca)