

**WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL
STUDENT TEACHER IN A TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM?**

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to explore and investigate specific factors, qualities, and characteristics student teachers and teacher associates believe create teaching success in the classroom during a teacher education program. Connections between teacher education and the art of teaching were analyzed, particularly with respect to student teachers' beliefs of preparedness to teach. Student participants in this project submitted to two face-to-face audiotape interviews. Interviews were conducted directly following the conclusions of Professional Semesters I and II. Teacher participants completed written anecdotal reports. The results were transcribed and analyzed. The method of analysis was qualitative. The data were analyzed thematically. Student teachers do see the value in most of the campus courses they take during Professional Semesters I and II. Both groups of student teachers rated caring as the most important characteristic required for success in the teaching profession, and both rated planning as most important to success in classroom teaching. Results show that teacher associates do have some impact on the overall attitudes and skills given to a preservice teacher. The study also shows a need for the Faculty of Education to work more closely with inexperienced teacher associates. The best mechanism for this is seen to be the strong, supportive, nurturing environments formed among university consultants, student teachers, and teacher associates during the practicum.

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Introduction

Thomas B. Corcoran (1995) states, “a number of experts and organizations have suggested that the most promising professional development programs or policies are those that stimulate and support site-based initiatives. Professional development is likely to have greater impact on practice if it is closely linked to initiatives to improve practice.”

It is with Corcoran’s (1995) statement in mind that I entered into this project. The significance of this activity is that it is an area of professional interest. I have worked in the office of Field Experiences at the University of Lethbridge for 17 years. I have assisted and advised hundreds of students in the Faculty of Education’s teacher education program. I have yet to discover what combination of factors, qualities, or characteristics makes a successful teacher. Specifically, I wished to explore and investigate what student teachers believe is successful teaching and to discover if there are characteristics of successful teachers that student teachers fail to recognize.

Over the last five years it seemed to me that the numbers of student teachers encountering difficulties in a practicum experience was rising. I decided to conduct a simple statistical analysis to check my perception (see Appendix A). The statistics showed that while the numbers of students in difficulty in Professional Semester I were relatively small and consistent, the numbers rose considerably in Professional Semester II. There are many reasons for these increases, some of which may include: as students progress through practica they are required to teach more hours and work independently for which they may not be well enough prepared; in the best interest of student teachers, teacher associates and university consultants, knowing student teachers still face Professional Semester III, have raised their expectations and standards, thereby seeking

to “weed out” weaker students from the profession; and being conscious of the complexity and evolving dynamics in today’s classrooms, teacher associates and university consultants, knowing how difficult the profession has become, are more reluctant to pass student teachers on to Professional Semester III.

Research Problem and Rationale

Research Question.

What makes a successful student teacher during a teacher education program?

Supplementary questions will seek to determine sources of the specific factors, qualities, and characteristics that assist in making a student teacher successful, according to the perceptions of student teachers and of their teacher associates.

Elements of these questions were arranged in interviews for student teachers and in anecdotal surveys for teacher associates.

Definitions.

Levels of instruction: for the purpose of this study, “levels of instruction” will be defined as the three professional semester components each student teacher engages in throughout the teacher preparation program at the University of Lethbridge.

Practica: classroom experience components to which each student is exposed in a teacher preparation program (the number of weeks in practica vary depending on the institution attended).

Teacher Associates: experienced classroom teachers who have a minimum of two years practice teaching and who possess a permanent teaching certificate granted in the province of Alberta.

Successful teaching: teaching in which a person possesses and exhibits: confidence, clear and concise communication skills (verbal and written), a high level of content knowledge, varied methods of instructional skills, classroom management skills, varied evaluation methods, and strong interpersonal skills. (See Competency Checklist attached)

Perceptions of success: in an individual's mind, teaching performance that is perceived as successful.

Professional Semester I: Education 3500 is The University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Education's first professional semester (PS I). Students are assigned full-time to a school for approximately 125 hours (5 weeks) in a generic practicum, in any grade from K-9, to develop and practice skills and knowledge related to on-campus components presented in advance of the practicum.

Professional Semester II: Education 3600 is The University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Education's second professional semester (PS II). Students are assigned full-time to a school for approximately 150 hours (6 weeks) in a subject-specific practicum, in any grade from K-12.

Professional Semester III: Education 4571-4575 is The University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Education's last professional Semester (PS III). This professional semester is an internship. Students are assigned full-time to a school for an entire semester (approximately 375 hours or 15 weeks). Students have the choice of participating in PS III in an elementary (Education 4571), secondary (Education 4572), special focus (Education 4573: Native Education), or fine arts (Education 4574 or 4575) strand.

The main purpose of Professional Semester III is to give interns a transitional teaching experience in preparation for a position as a teacher. PS III consists of an Internship, academic study, and professional development. Interns have the invaluable opportunity to take responsibility half-time for a classroom with guided support from a Teacher Mentor within a collaborative framework.

Program Overview

Since its inception, the University of Lethbridge Faculty of Education has admitted students on a quota-system. Students are admitted based on grade point average and placed in 11 different subject-specific majors.

All students must take Education 2500, an introductory Education course with a field experience component (or its equivalent), before they can be admitted to the program. The purpose of the course is to assist students in making a decision concerning admission into the Faculty of Education and to assist the Faculty in determining the appropriateness of the student's admission. The Field Experiences component of Education 2500 consists of two three-hour blocks of time in the morning for students in an assigned school classroom.

The Faculty of Education offers a combined degree and after-degree program. Students admitted to the Faculty of Education begin the teacher preparation program with Professional Semester I. Professional Semester I is composed of six 24-hour modules. The modules are: Curriculum & Instruction (interpreting and mapping of content knowledge and integrated teaching strategies, with particular focus on meeting learner needs through establishing learner outcomes, lesson planning, and classroom management); Educational Psychology (principles of educational psychology applied to

classroom applications, including child development, principles of learning, classroom management, and motivation); Language in Education (understanding the role of language and the language arts in education generally and in instruction across the curriculum); Evaluation of Learning (introduction to a variety of approaches to evaluating student learning); Teaching Seminar (understanding the personal and professional nature of teaching; learner and classroom contexts; teaching strategies and teacher development); and Communications Technology and Education (introduction to some of the ways in which basic technology may be used in classrooms).

In addition to the modules, the students are assigned to school classrooms in grades one through nine for five weeks. This is a generic practicum in which students are expected to develop and practice skills and knowledge related to on-campus components.

Professional Semester II is composed of four courses. The courses are: Principles of Curriculum & Instruction for Majors (the relationship of content and teaching strategies in specific subject majors); Psychology and Education of Atypical Students in the Regular Classroom (introduction to the characteristics of children with special needs, including issues and problems facing educators); Social Context of Schooling (social and cultural influences and issues affecting learning, teaching, and the process of schooling); and Evaluation of Student Learning (emphasizing data gathering, summarizing, and interpreting data and use of the results to improve curriculum, teaching, and guidance).

These courses are 39-hours each with the exception of the Evaluation course, which is 20 hours. There is also a field component in this professional semester. Students are assigned to school classrooms for six weeks in a subject-specific practicum in any grade from one through 12.

The Faculty of Education also has one additional professional semester.

Professional Semester III is an integrated five-course equivalent semester consisting of two components: a half-time teaching internship in a school placement and engagement in professional study under the direction of a faculty mentor. For the purpose of this project I will only be dealing with Professional Semester I and Professional Semester II.

Since the teacher preparation program has an equally important field-based component to it, I began to think about some of the very successful teachers I know and as I silently described them to myself I wrote down my thoughts. I also began conferring with my colleagues and, most importantly, the Secondments and Faculty Associates, all of whom have recently and temporarily left their classrooms to work with us in the Faculty of Education. Every person I spoke with described successful teachers in the same way, as individuals with similar personal and professional characteristics, qualities, and factors. I wondered if our student teachers had the same perceptions of themselves so I asked some of them, informally. All of these student teachers, too, believed that personal/professional factors, qualities, and characteristics work together to create successful student teachers.

Literature Review

The identification of specific factors, qualities, and characteristics that can assist in making a student teacher successful is an area of professional interest for me. This study is an attempt to explore and investigate this question further. I hope to expand on existing research and add to the body of knowledge specific to what student teachers believe is successful teaching. Inquiries into student teachers' thinking may provide insights into the effects of teacher education programs and suggest program improvements to prepare new teachers better (McDermott, Gormley, Rothenberg, & Hammer, 1995).

Research in this area explores affective and personal attributes as well as specific teaching skills but, overall, there is sparse literature on teacher effectiveness (Silcock, 1993). Learning to teach is a very demanding and complex activity. Preservice teachers are required to utilize both theoretical and interpersonal skills as well as personal characteristics. Not surprisingly, a large amount of literature exists on the need to understand more about students and student teaching (Hawkey, 1995).

Teacher education programs have developed their own unique attributes over the years. Many universities believe that preservice teachers require sound methodological grounding to enhance their grasp of teaching. As well, teacher education programs have various lengths of practicum experience. Koetsier, Wubbels, and Korthagen (1996) suggest that teacher education programs require extensive partnerships with schools because student teachers require many hours and levels of teaching practice. This practice enables preservice teachers to apply techniques and strategies learned at university.

Andrew (1997) notes that while academic skills are important, interpersonal qualities are essential to good teaching.

Research in the area of student teaching largely views this arena in terms of what makes an effective teacher. Discussions surround attitudes of student teachers and how, if at all, their preconceived notions change over time. Overall, it is believed that student teachers do have well formed beliefs and opinions regarding teaching before they begin a teacher preparation program. These same students have also formulated beliefs and attitudes about what makes an effective teacher (Walls, Nardi, von Minden, & Hoffman, 2002), basing their beliefs regarding effective teaching largely on affective areas rather than on cognitive areas. Witcher, Onwuegbuzie, and Minor (2001) state that strong teachers are caring, empathetic, and supportive. It was also noted that effective teachers utilize good management and instructional techniques along with good personal characteristics. (One could debate that if a teacher has created a caring and positive learning atmosphere, management and instructional techniques are easier to implement.) Student teachers also identify management and instructional strategies, as well as affective qualities, as being important when teaching children.

Since student teachers have firm beliefs regarding effective teaching, it has been suggested that those firmly held beliefs may not change over short practicum periods such as a semester. However, there is movement in terms of student teachers' beliefs when they are involved in a five-year program with multiple opportunities to teach (Walls, et al., 2002).

This finding bodes well for the University of Lethbridge program, as our student teachers are involved in a lengthy, variety-filled teaching experience. Over the course of five years our students are immersed in a number of realistic environments.

McDermott, et al. (1995) suggest that experience is an excellent teacher. This is corroborated by Berliner (1987) when he suggests that classroom experiences not only shape but accelerate student teachers' growth towards professional attributes. The research also suggests that there is a definite correlation between sound methods courses and extensive classroom teaching experience. In part, this is due to the fact that students need time to put theory into practice. Goodlad (1991) believes teacher education programs are more useful when classroom courses and actual classroom teaching are more closely integrated. This enables preservice teachers not only to reflect on what they are learning but also on how they are implementing the knowledge. The ability to reflect should be in the forefront of preservice teaching programs (Pultorak, 1996). Pultorak also suggests that researchers need to discover ways to enhance reflection. According to him, the ability to reflect is a developmental process.

Marso and Pigge (1996) suggest that affective changes do occur as preservice teachers progress through teacher preparation programs. Their findings are supported by research done by Jensen and Shepston (1997) who believe the quality of work with teacher associates makes a difference. They also believe that practical experience brings theory into practice. Researchers agree that large amounts of practicum experience aids preservice teachers in establishing connections between theory and practice.

The personal attributes of effective preservice teachers include such characteristics as: compassion, good judgment, fairness, tact (Pigge & Marso, 1990); and

integrity, dynamics, and positive attitudes (Ilmer, Snyder, Erbaugh, & Kurz, 1997).

Housego (1994) states that effective teachers interact with children in a loving, hopeful, trusting, and responsible manner.

While competence is the ability to do what is required and to do it well (Brezinka, 1988), it is also important to consider the personal dimension of knowledge, which allows the individual to recognize and act in different situations (Wolf, 1989). Hawkey (1997), while noting that teachers rate interpersonal skills highly, also warns there is a potential danger of student teachers replicating a mentor's orientation. Hawkey (1997) believes that preservice teachers value mentor support in the early stages of their practicum experience but those mentor teachers must have positive teaching orientations. Both Hawkey, and Bents and Anderson (1991) suggest that student teachers' development is affected by interpersonal factors. Bents and Anderson (1991) further suggest personal characteristics can be a major cause of problems for preservice teachers. Offutt (1995) concluded that problematic personal behaviours include poor self-esteem, lack of confidence, shyness, and discipline problems. Furthermore, Offutt believes that attitude is crucial to successful student teaching.

Ilmer, et al. (1997) in their study rated indicators of successful teaching. Personal attributes such as compassion and other interpersonal qualities such as communication rated very highly. Subject matter and content knowledge were rated at a lower level. Pigge and Marso (1990) go on to suggest that prospective teachers with positive attitudes become even more positive as they progress through teacher preparation programs. Another study by Marso and Pigge (1996), found that positive affective changes also occur as preservice teachers progress through teacher preparation programs.

McDermott, et al. (1995) further note that practica experiences that are varied and extensive, in which preservice teachers receive constructive evaluations, can help preservice teachers move more quickly to more mature thoughts regarding their teaching.

Whereas Pigge and Marso (1990) and Jensen and Shepston (1997) found that preservice teachers' attitudes became more positive as they progressed through their program, other studies contradict this research. Disposito (1980) and Sacks and Harrington (1982) found that some student teachers' attitudes toward teaching and school became less favourable after student teaching. Sacks and Harrington (1982) also found that after field experiences, students expressed more concern for the emotional needs of their pupils than for classroom control.

Telese (1996) notes that preservice teachers continually modify their beliefs about teaching due to their participation in teacher education programs, yet this influence seems to be minor in comparison to the experiential effects of personal life, previous schooling, and student teaching (Brousseau, Book, & Byers, 1988). Jensen and Shepston (1997) further suggest that an integral part of teacher education programs must allow for time for preservice teachers to collaborate with other preservice teachers of various majors.

All of the literature reviewed to date supports and recommends that all teacher education programs incorporate sufficient amounts of classroom practical experience. The more exposure to classrooms student teachers get, the more they seem to learn about themselves, teachers, students, parents, faculty/staff, and the community (Telese, 1996). In Ilmer, et al. (1997), for example, knowledge of community was rated as number one in their study of perceptions of successful teaching.

To explore the developmental process in individuals moving from student to teacher, Pultorak (1996) conducted a study of reflection through journal writing. He concluded that reflection through journal writing can be a valuable resource for the growth and development of novice teachers. Further to this, there has been an educational movement to provide preservice teachers with more authentic and valuable assessments, and a milieu in which they are able not only to assess but reflect on their own student teaching accomplishments. Mokhtari, Yellin, Bull, and Montgomery (1996) believe that the use of a portfolio as a cumulative record of progress can foster reflective thinking, and serve as an effective assessment tool.

The literature reviewed to this point reveals there is an abundance of research on teaching and teachers but there are limited studies on preservice or student teachers' perceptions of what factors, qualities, and characteristics constitute successful or effective teaching. There is little research in this area, and some of it appears ambiguous and contradictory (Pigge & Marso, 1990). Relatively few researchers have studied the perceptions of preservice teachers regarding characteristics of effective or successful teachers (Witcher, Onwuegbuzie, & Minor, 2001).

Research Methods

Overview of Methodology

For the purpose of this study I have chosen a qualitative method design because the research question is exploratory and lends itself to description. It is my intention to explore and describe and compare student teachers' and teacher associates' perceptions of characteristics, qualities, and factors necessary to the success of student teachers. In this approach to research it is extremely important to be able to describe in detail the experiences of the participants being studied. Schwandt (1994) believes that to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it. The product of the researcher's labour is a complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings, and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998).

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that, "data collected have been termed soft, that is, rich in description of people, places, and conversations, and not easily handled by statistical procedures" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 2). Quantitative researchers strive to quantify phenomena in order to formulate general laws. As Flick (2002) suggests, they take random samples of a population and make general statements regarding results. Observed phenomena are then classified based on their frequency of distribution.

In order to discover the meaning of teaching and how an individual becomes successful at teaching, one must discuss and ask what lived experiences does one go

through during student teaching rounds. Neuman (1997) adds that research is a way of going about trying to uncover answers to questions. This research is an effort to answer questions about the complexities of student teaching.

Anthropology, psychology, political science, and sociology all involve the study of people in terms of their beliefs and their behaviours. Neuman (1997) describes the disciplines above as soft sciences. This is due to the fact that their subject matter is human life, and not always objectifiable. In order to understand what makes a successful student teacher, one must comprehend the complexities of what is involved in becoming a teacher.

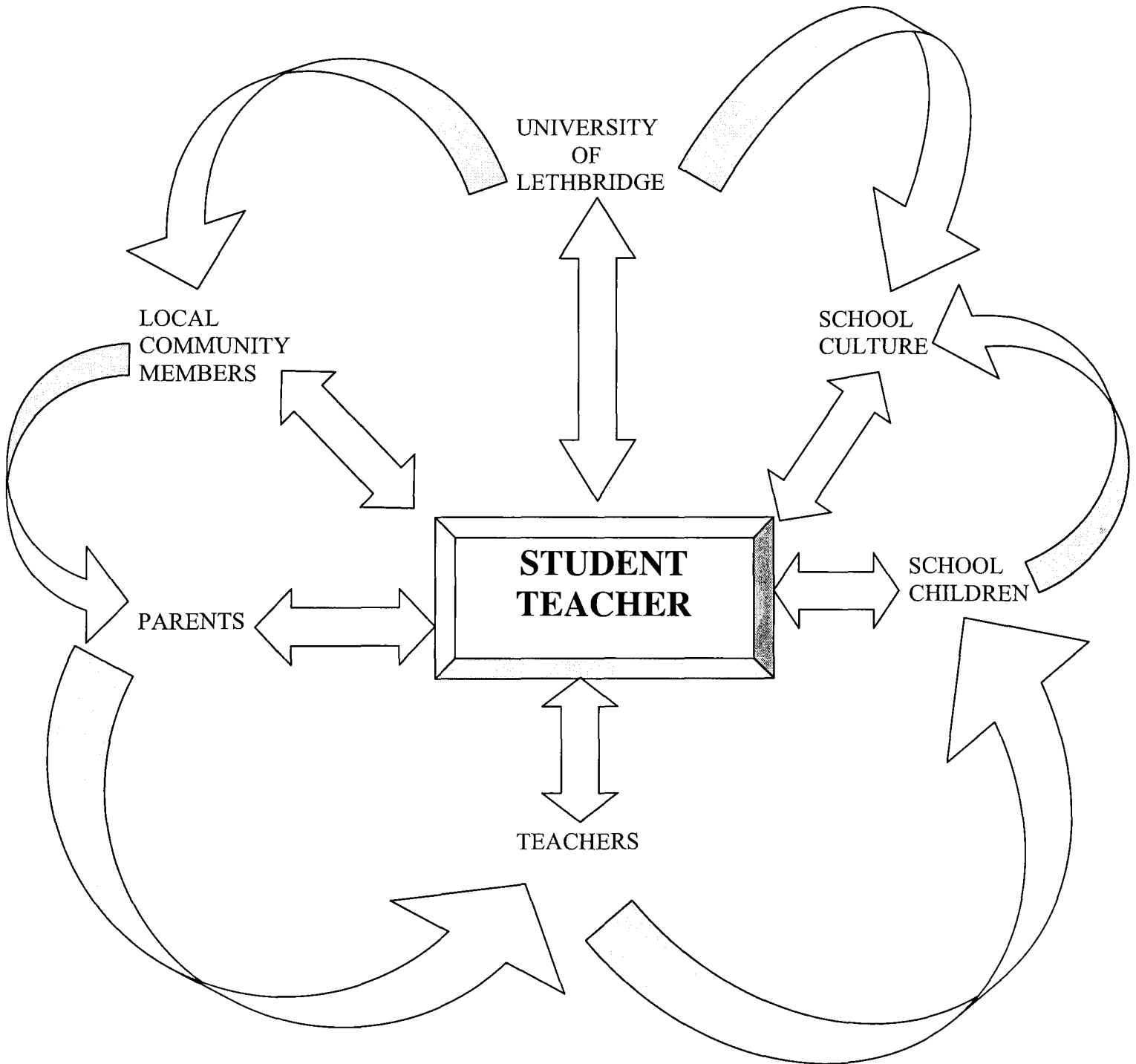
Mason (2002) found the following:

Through qualitative research we can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate. (p. 1)

The following figure represents some of the complexities involved in becoming a teacher.

Figure 1

The World of Teaching.



To become a teacher, one must become enculturated into all realms of the task. Student teachers are impacted by the University, teachers, children, school culture, parents, local community members, and their own formative experiences outside of the school and university contexts. In order to understand the world of teaching from the student teachers' perspective, it is essential to understand both the impact of such factors on student teachers, and the impact of student teachers on those factors.

The purpose of this research is to discover the qualities needed to be successful at student teaching. That is one of the purposes of social research. Neuman (1997) proposes that social research may be organized into three groups depending on what researchers are trying to accomplish. They can explore a new topic, describe a social phenomenon, or explain why something occurs. This research delves into an exploration of why certain individuals are more successful than others in student teaching.

This study took place over an eight month period. Face-to-face audiotape interviews were conducted with 11 Professional Semester I students, both female and male, who had been admitted to the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge for the Fall Semester, 1998. Informants were selected for their knowledge and insight into the teaching situation and, hence, their ability to help gain access to new explanations (Krathwohl, 1993). Face-to-face interviews were selected as a means of data collection because these subjects were easily accessible. The first set of interviews took place following the subjects' completion of the practicum component of Professional Semester I in December, 1998.

Teacher associates involved in the study were those who had worked with the 11 student teachers in either professional semester.

Due to time constraints and the nature of the teacher preparation program at the University of Lethbridge all the subjects were after-degree students. They were chosen randomly from the 200 newly admitted Education students in Fall, 1998. The students were informed, in writing (see Appendix B), of their rights to confidentiality and anonymity, and the voluntary nature of the study. The letter also stated that each participant could withdraw from the study at any time, without prejudice.

Eleven subjects were chosen because the Faculty of Education offers 11 major teaching subject areas to its students through the teacher education program. These same 11 subjects were followed through Professional Semester II and were interviewed, in the same manner, after completion of their PS II practicum in April, 1999. One subject withdrew. The same interview questions were administered with minor modifications specific to Professional Semester II. After each interview, a copy of the transcription of the interview was given to each interviewee to ensure accuracy of response, meaning, and intent. The questions were pre-tested.

The instrument (see Appendix C) that was administered to the 11 student teachers was an interview questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 21 open-ended questions. Questions in the first interview pertained particularly to Professional Semester I. Questions in the second interview pertained particularly to Professional Semester II. The instrument was designed to measure student teachers' perceptions of which factors, qualities, or characteristics are required in order for a student teacher to be successful in a

teacher education program. Anecdotal reports and survey responses from teacher associates were coded and tabulated.

The interview data were analyzed thematically. Krathwohl (1993) discusses a process of analytic induction for discovering commonalities within the data. This leads to description and, finally, to explanation of the regularities. Qualitative methods are inductive: they let the problem emerge from the data or remain open to interpretations of the problem different from those held initially (Krathwohl, 1993). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) also note that documents of experience can be content-analyzed; that is, themes and issues can be isolated, counted, and interpreted. The data from the first interview were compared to the data from the second interview to see if there were any differences in perceptions as student teachers advanced through the teacher preparation program. Finally, data from both interviews were compared to the perceptions of teacher associates.

Limitations of the Study

1. Mortality rate. One student teacher either withdrew from the faculty or failed a professional semester.
2. Small sampling. The sample is small; 11 out of a possible 200 after-degree students in subject-specific majors, and nine out of a possible 21 teacher associates.
3. Hawthorne Effect. It is possible individual behaviours and responses were altered because the student-teachers knew they were being studied.
4. The maturity of subjects could have influenced the results of the study. For example older students (degree holding) might have responded differently due to their having

more life experiences.

5. Students may not have been willing to disclose to me as they would be if an arbitrary third-party were conducting the interviews. Students may have felt compelled to answer a certain way because of my position in Field Experiences.
6. The interviewer's lack of experience and training could have influenced the results.

Intended Outcomes of the Study

1. To determine the legitimacy of what the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge does well in its professional semesters.
2. To discover if there are characteristics of successful teachers that student teachers fail to recognize.
3. To determine if there is an identifiable combination of personal and professional factors, qualities, and characteristics, that successful student teachers possess.

Interview Procedure

Interviews were scheduled personally with each subject in two-hour time slots. The interviews were conducted in a quiet room on-campus. The subjects were asked to choose a comfortable chair, offered a glass of water, and some small talk ensued in an effort to help each individual relax. The subjects were asked to sign a consent form before the interviews commenced. A short explanation of the interview was also given. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. It is important to note that interviews were held at the conclusion of Professional Semester I but before subjects left campus for Christmas break and prior to entrance into Professional Semester II. The same procedure

was applied at the conclusion of Professional Semester II in April, 1999.

Participants

This project involved eleven individuals who had previously completed a university degree, and their teacher associates for either practicum. The students were chosen because of the design of the University of Lethbridge's teacher education program. Since these individuals had a university degree they were able to complete both professional semesters back-to-back. Eleven subjects were chosen so that every subject major area could be represented, one attempt to maximize the diversity in the sample.

During the course of this study, one of the participants withdrew from the faculty. The remaining subjects comprised two males and eight females.

Sampling Procedure

In the Fall of 1998 a list of after-degree students was obtained from the Faculty of Education's general admission's list. Names with attached majors were printed on strips of paper and placed in eleven different containers, by major. Names were drawn randomly until one student in each major subject area was selected. Each subject was contacted, the study was described, and each subject was asked to participate. When consent was given each subject was asked to sign an interview consent form (see Appendix B).

All of the candidates were eager to participate in this study. Once each professional semester was completed, each subject was interviewed (see Appendix C and D).

Also selected for the purposes of this study was each subject's teacher associate.

In order to create a more comprehensive interview, I gathered information from a teacher associate's survey (see Appendix E) which enabled me to infuse into the interview insights from the perspective of practicing teachers. The surveys were mailed out to teacher associates after the completion of each professional semester. Out of the Professional Semester I practicum, four out of ten (40%) were completed and returned. In Professional Semester II, five out of ten (50%) were completed and returned.

Teacher surveys were analyzed in terms of themes/topics/characteristics believed to make a successful student teacher. Information gleaned from the teacher survey informed the development of the student interviews.

Interview Format

Student teacher appointments were scheduled individually following each teaching round. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Once each interview was transcribed, a written transcription was given to each subject to ensure their comments were accurately documented. Subjects were also given the opportunity to expand upon or clarify their responses.

Data Analysis

In order to reflect upon, and fully comprehend the amount of material collected, and to make recommendations, I chose a qualitative research strategy. Qualitative data is usually rich in text representing people in some social activity or event. In qualitative research one looks for patterns or relationships (Neuman, 1997).

This study appeared to fit nicely into a qualitative approach, since explanations tend to be rich in detail, sensitive to content, and capable of showing the complex processes or sequences of social life (Neuman, 1997).

I sought to uncover and document through personal interviews what student teachers believe successful teaching is, and what successful teachers are like. Since this research was largely text driven, a way was required to interpret the data in a meaningful and truthful manner. Flick (2002) points out the concern should be given to how people produce social reality in terms of their lives. As a researcher, I was striving to uncover how the individuals in this study were interpreting and, thus, creating work based on their interpretations of knowledge and experience. The questions being asked of student teachers were ones of interpretation and action. In what ways were they comprehending what they were being taught in the University program, and during the practicum, and how was that knowledge being applied based on each individual's understanding and personal make-up?

In any research, one thinks of the data in terms of a puzzle (Mason, 2002). Qualitative researchers, "focus on subjective meanings, definitions, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of specific cases" (Neuman, 1997). Data analysis is an attempt to capture an aspect of social life as a researcher looks for patterns, words, themes or features.

Thematic coding is a way of analyzing data. It is a way of classifying data according to themes. In qualitative research data is collected and then coded. It is a step-

by-step process. Initially, open coding is performed, during a first pass through recently collected data (Neuman, 1997). Themes are identified and labelled in order to make the data more easily manageable. The overall purpose of open coding is to bring themes to the surface.

Axial coding (Neuman, 1997) is a second pass through of the data. In this phase a researcher reviews the initial codes assigned. New codes and themes may emerge. The researcher then moves towards organizing and linking themes together.

The final pass through is selective coding (Neuman, 1997) which involves scanning data and previous codes. In this phase major themes are identified and elaborated on more fully.

Analytic memo writing (Neuman, 1997) involves creating notes of thoughts and ideas after the coding process. This notetaking promotes a link between the data and thinking processes.

A qualitative researcher seeks to interpret patterns and discuss meaning. Data analysis involves examining, sorting, categorizing, evaluating, comparing, synthesizing, and contemplating the coded data, as well as reviewing the raw and recorded data (Neuman, 1997).

Findings

In both Professional Semester I and II, subjects made reference to 12 topic areas, each of which is explained in detail in this section of the study.

Professional/Personal Characteristics

Table 1 presents a variety of characteristics respondents believed a successful student teacher needed for both professional semesters.

Table 1

Professional/Personal Characteristics Required for Successful Teaching

Theme	Respondents	
	PS I	PS II
Caring	8	8
Organized	4	7
Continually Learning	2	8
Hard Working	6	3
Patient	4	5
Positive Attitude	5	4
Risk Taker	2	7
Enthusiastic	5	3
Good Listener	4	4
Love of Teaching	3	5
Sense of Humour	1	6
Energetic	3	2

Subjects in both semesters identified caring as the most important characteristic.

Subjects strongly believed that successful student teachers required a caring nature. The characteristics that showed the greatest changes in perception between the two semesters

were continually learning (from 2 to 8); risk taker (2 to 7); and sense of humour (1 to 6).

Energetic was rated as least important overall.

Teaching Performance

Table 2 presents respondents' perceptions of the relative important aspects of teaching performance.

Table 2

Classroom Teaching Performance

Themes	Respondents	
	PS I	PS II
Planning/Preparation	7	9
Communication (directions, expectations, routines, rules)	7	9
Classroom Management	6	9
Content Knowledge	6	8
Relevancy of Curriculum/Interesting	8	6
Teaching Style/Technique	6	7
Teach variety of levels/abilities	6	4
Ask for Help	5	3
Research Resources	4	3
Develop Own Style	2	4
Reflect Upon Teaching/Learning	4	1
Plan More Than Needed	2	2
Flexible	2	2
Have Fun	1	3

Planning/Preparation and *Communication* were seen as being most important in this area, followed closely by *classroom management*. Respondents also rated content

knowledge and relevancy of curriculum as more important than such things as reflecting upon their teaching/learning and developing their own style. Being *flexible* was seen as being of less importance.

On-Campus Instruction/Preparation

The results in this topic area provided evidence of how well-prepared respondents felt upon entrance to their practicum. Table 3 displays some of the variation in findings, in order of perceived importance.

Table 3

On-Campus Instruction/Preparation

Theme	Respondents	
	PS I	PS II
Curriculum and Instruction	8	9
Evaluation	4	6
Social Context*		5
Theory into Practice	2	1

Of greatest importance for the respondents was the content of the Curriculum and Instruction module/course. Lowest in importance were modules that sought to relate theory to practice. It is important to note that half of the PS II subjects felt that the Social Context course heightened their awareness of school and classroom issues.

* Note: Social Context is only offered in Professional Semester II.

Practicum

The topic area of the practicum was explored in detail in the interviews. Table 4 presents the most frequently mentioned themes in order of perceived importance.

Table 4

Student Teaching Experiences in a Classroom

Theme	Respondents	
	PS I	PS II
Importance of Student Teaching Viewed as a Positive Experience	8	7
Focussed on Survival and Curriculum	5	
Focussed on Getting to Know Students		8
Curriculum – Comfort Level		6
Challenging	3	3
Hard Work	3	2
Connect Theory into Practice	2	3
Hands-On		3

There were noted differences within each theme depending upon which professional semester a student had just completed. For example, one major difference was that while PS I student teachers focussed more on survival and the curriculum, PS II student teachers focussed more on the children, as they seemed to have gained greater knowledge, confidence, and comfort with the curriculum. Further, discussion over curriculum in P.S. I revolved around the curriculum itself in terms of understanding what it was they were to teach. In P.S. II there was much less focus on what to teach, and more on getting to know students and understanding their needs (who to teach). Most

subjects, regardless of practicum level, felt that student teaching was challenging and/or hard work. However, more P.S. II students felt more comfortable using more hands-on activities in their teaching.

Relationships With Students

Table 5 presents respondents' perceptions of the importance and character of the topic area of student relationships.

Table 5

Importance of Student Relationships

Theme	Respondents	
	P.S. I	P.S. II
Social Interactions	10	9
Positive Attitude	10	8
Mutual Respect	9	9
Teachers are Human	7	2
Have Fun	6	6
Learn along with Students	2	2

These results show almost no difference in perception between P.S. I and P.S. II, except on the theme *teachers are human*. Here, there was a pronounced drop in attention accorded that theme from P.S. I to P.S. II. The emphasis on interpersonal relations is very strong among both groups, but few members of either group saw themselves as learning along with their students.

Relationships With Teacher Associates

Table 6 presents respondents' perceptions of the importance and character of the topic area of teacher associate relationships.

Table 6

Importance of Teacher Associate Relationships

Theme	Respondents	
	P.S. I	P.S. II
Encouraging/Supportive	5	8
Positive Attitude	2	7
Respectful	4	1

The results show that as the respondents moved from P.S. I to P.S. II an encouraging/supportive teacher associate with a positive attitude was of increasing importance. However, P.S. II respondents were more inclined to believe that being in a respectful relationship was not as crucial to their development as a preservice teacher.

Teaching Profession

Table 7 presents respondents' perceptions of how the teaching profession differs from other professions, and the characteristics they felt were most necessary for success in the profession.

Table 7

Views on the Profession of Teaching

Themes	Respondents	
	P.S. I	P.S. II
Must Like Children	9	4
Helping Profession	8	5
Hard Work	4	3
Long Hours	4	3
Rewarding	3	5
Different Everyday	2	4
Every Day is a Learning Experience	5	1

Most P.S. I students felt *liking children* and *helping* were the most important aspects of the profession. However, by the time they had completed P.S. II, several participants had changed their perceptions, producing a much flatter set of responses, with less general agreement, particularly on the themes of liking children and helping.

Primary Responsibilities

The topic area of student teachers' primary responsibilities was explored in detail.

Table 8 presents the most frequently-mentioned themes in order of importance.

Table 8

Student Teachers' Primary Responsibilities

Theme	Respondents	
	P.S. I	P.S. II
Teach So Students Understand	9	8
Maintain a Safe Environment	7	4
Make Students Feel Important	4	1
Competence		2
Approachable		2
Have Fun While Teaching	1	1
Know Students	1	
Treat Students With Respect		1

Both groups felt that ensuring students understand the curriculum was of primary importance. Safety was of greater concern to most P.S. I students. There was very little divergence of perception in the responses of both groups to this question.

Needs

Table 9 presents areas in which preservice teachers felt they needed more preparation, experience, and expertise.

Table 9

Areas Student Teachers Felt Were Lacking.

Themes	Respondents	
	P.S. I	P.S. II
Classroom Management	8	10
Varied and Concrete Teaching Strategies		8
More Practice Teaching	1	
Evaluation Samples/Techniques		1

Both groups felt that classroom management was crucial to helping meet student teacher needs, and they needed more help with it. In addition, a large number of P.S. II respondents felt that *teaching strategies* was another area where more emphasis should be placed.

Teacher Associate Perceptions

After each semester, teacher associates who worked with the student teachers in this study were asked, by survey, for their perceptions of the characteristics of effective student teachers. Following P.S. I, four teacher associates responded. Following P.S. II, five teacher associates responded.

The survey consisted of eight questions (see Appendix E) addressing personal and professional characteristics, attitudes, and preparation. Generally, these teacher associates were not always able or willing to distinguish between personal and professional

characteristics. For example, there were instances in which personal characteristics identified by one teacher associate were identified as professional characteristics by another.

Personal Characteristics

Table 10 presents a variety of personal characteristics teacher associates believed a successful student teacher required for both professional semesters.

Table 10

Personal Characteristics of Successful Student Teachers

Theme	Respondents	
	PS I	PS II
Sense of Humour		3
Enjoy Working with Children/Adolescents		3
Caring	2	
Communication Skills are Good		2
Enthusiastic	2	
Hard Working		2
Responsible		2

Two P.S. I teacher associates identified caring and enthusiastic as the most important characteristics. Three P.S. II teacher associates strongly believed that successful student teachers required a sense of humour and should enjoy working with children/adolescents. Two others identified three additional characteristics as being important.

Professional Characteristics

Table 11 presents a variety of professional characteristics teacher associates believed a successful student teacher required for both professional semesters.

Table 11

Professional Characteristics of Successful Student Teachers

Themes	Respondents	
	PS I	PS II
Knowledgeable	3	4
Preparation/Planning	3	3
Organized	3	
Adaptable	2	
Initiative	2	
Respectful		2

Teacher Associates at both the P.S. I and II levels felt that the most important professional characteristic student teachers could possess is subject knowledge. Teacher Associates at the P.S. I level also rated preparation/planning and organization as very important. Of lesser importance to P.S. I Teacher Associates was adaptability and initiative. P.S. II Teacher Associates placed some importance on the characteristic of being respectful.

Personal/Professional Characteristics Student Teacher Exhibited Over the Course of the Practicum

The perceptions of teacher associates in this topic area provided evidence of obvious personal and professional characteristics exhibited by the specific student teachers assigned to the teacher associate respondents at the time of the survey. Table 12 displays some of the variation in findings, in order of perceived importance.

Table 12

Personal/Professional Characteristics Exhibited by Student Teachers

Theme	Respondents	
	PS I	PS II
Hard Worker		3
Committed to Teaching	3	
Organized	3	
Prepared	2	3
Interest in Children		2
Caring	1	

Of greatest importance for the P.S. II teacher associates was the preparedness of their student teacher and whether or not they were hard working. P.S. I respondents felt that commitment to teaching and organization were most important. It appeared that both groups rated affective characteristics lower in importance.

In their responses to a similar question regarding characteristics that hinder success in student teachers, two P.S. I teacher associates suggested poor preparation, two suggested poor academic skills, and one suggested untidy appearance. One P.S. II

teacher suggested poor preparation and one P.S. II teacher associate suggested untidy appearance.

Teacher associates for both Professional Semester I and II provided abundant evidence of similarities between what teachers perceive and what the student teachers perceive to be the characteristics of successful student teachers. Their responses support the idea that practicing teachers believe that before student teachers can progress to higher levels of effectiveness they need to experience success in the basic foundations of teaching, such as of planning, preparation, and the more traditional focus of delivery of the curriculum.

On the whole, teacher associates felt the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge provides student teachers with skills and knowledge that equip them for success. Two teacher associates at the Professional Semester I level indicated that the Faculty of Education teacher education program was not providing skills and knowledge for student teachers' success in all areas but, by the time student teachers had completed Professional Semester II, all five teacher associate respondents felt the Faculty of Education's preparation allowed students teachers to be successful.

When teachers were asked if their student teachers changed during the practicum in terms of their attitude towards students, all but one indicated they did. Most believed that they changed because of the increased quality of interactions with students.

All teacher associates felt that student teacher attitudes towards teaching changed as well. Most felt that appropriate attitudes were being reinforced within the teacher education program.

With regards to the effectiveness of the teacher education program, most teachers felt that the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge was doing a great job, but they wanted more systematic contact with faculty members. The only negative comments were with regards to student teachers who came into the classroom with some of those characteristics which hinder success.

Discussion

Research suggests that, overall, preservice teachers begin their teaching experiences by moving from concerns over content to, eventually, the personal side of teaching. Student teachers initially are concerned over knowing curriculum and content; through experience, they then move to greater concern for personal attributes. In addition, student teachers are also impacted by their teacher associate's perspectives.

Current research suggests that, eventually, content knowledge and subject matter are rated lower by student teachers than personal attributes. Finally, research also suggests that successful student teaching is affected by the amount of time spent in practicing in the field.

The University of Lethbridge Faculty of Education gives time to practica experience which is considered to be extensive. As well, students are *required* to reflect on their teaching experiences through "journal writing" and to create a teaching portfolio. Authors such as Walls, et al., 2002 and Ferraro, 2000 consider extensive practica experience and journal writing to lead to more mature thoughts regarding teaching in general.

Respondents were asked what characteristics they believed they needed for success in both professional semesters. Professional Semester I students felt that caring, hard work, enthusiasm, and positive attitude were most important characteristics. Professional Semester II students believed that being a continual learner, a risk taker, organized, and caring were of most importance.

Generally, the students in this study have presented a complicated matrix of stages of concern. For example, in response to questions about curriculum and instruction, they appear to have progressed from concerns about specific content and strategies, to a concern with the quality of relationship with their students. In addition, P.S. II respondents revealed an increased concern for additional help with particular aspects of classroom performance and an increased awareness of the importance of interpersonal relations. P.S. I students were far more concerned with providing a safe environment than were the P.S. II respondents, and both groups were equally adamant that *caring* is the most important personal and professional characteristic a student teacher can possess.

When teaching strategies were discussed, Professional Semester I students were concerned with delivering the curriculum in an interesting manner, planning/preparation, communication, classroom management, and content knowledge. Professional Semester II students focussed on classroom management, planning/preparation, communication content knowledge, and teaching styles. Professional Semester II students placed more emphasis on gaining content knowledge and control over their teaching environment. In Professional Semester II more time is spent teaching, in a particular subject area, which may explain concerns about the effectiveness of their teaching taking priority over other concerns. As well, because they are evaluated more extensively on their teaching performance, they may believe that is what their teacher associates and their university consultants are primarily expecting of them. So for P.S. II students, personal attributes

may still be deemed important but not *so* important during this particular time when they believe they are not being graded as heavily on that component. The Professional Semester II students believed that to be rated as effective, they had to display good classroom management skills. Accordingly, they felt that topic area needed more attention at the university level. Perhaps student teachers need to be made more cognizant of the connections between good classroom management, sound teaching strategies, and the creation of a positive classroom environment.

Further to the topic of on-campus preparation, Professional Semester I students thought that much of the content of the curriculum and instruction module/course, along with other components that helped them put theory into practice, were very important. In fact, Professional Semester I students felt that curriculum and instruction was crucial to their success. Curriculum and instruction gives them information that is concrete, so they can more easily apply the techniques taught.

Students in both semesters believed that there were areas in which they needed more practical experience, and more training. They included building relationships with students, and classroom management. Not all aspects of teaching are easily and concretely unveiled, taught, and learned. Classroom management is one of those aspects of effective teaching that is not easily taught, or understood immediately. There are many concrete steps that can be taken on the path to effective classroom management, but there are also many aspects that can only be discovered through experience.

Professional Semester II students agreed that curriculum and instruction was important but felt that evaluation was equally important. Initial preservice teachers appear to want to know what the curriculum is and how, then, to implement it in an effective manner. Professional Semester I students were more focussed on delivering curriculum; few were concerned with discovering if the information they taught was being sufficiently acquired by their students. Their first concern was over learning how to deliver the curriculum effectively. However, by the time they completed Professional Semester II, most of these student teachers were much more concerned that what they had taught was being learned.

When the discussions turned to reflecting on their teaching experiences, there were some interesting differences between the two practica. Professional Semester I students' most common responses identified teaching as a challenging activity. Certainly this theme makes sense as these students, for the first time, are in front of children and, subsequently, in charge of some aspects of the curriculum. Alternatively, the focus for Professional Semester II students was on getting to know the children in their classroom and the relevancy of what they were teaching. As these students progressed through preservice teaching they gave more thought to the challenge of balancing relationships with curriculum delivery. Most of the preservice teachers in this study appear to have moved through a perception of teaching itself as one big challenge to an understanding of the importance of relationship building, and its connection to meaningful delivery of subject matter. As students move through the program they see more clearly that the most

effective teachers strive to maintain a balance between providing a safe and caring environment, knowing the teaching content, and knowing how best to deliver it.

When discussing the specifics of building relationships with students and teacher associates both groups of student teachers had some similar feelings. They felt mutual respect and positive social interactions were critical to success. Knowing about students beyond the classroom was viewed as a meaningful way of establishing positive relations and developing mutual respect. They believe that when students feel their preservice teachers are striving to really get to know them as people and, conversely, preservice teachers get a better overall picture of each student, this can lead to teaching styles better suited to a particular group of students. Both groups of preservice teachers felt that their positive attitudes would allow them to be viewed as someone trying to make a difference. Witcher, et al. (2001) confirm this notion.

Professional Semester I student teachers were more likely to want to be viewed as “human beings” and for them, being positive (showing warmth and caring) helped them to this end. Professional Semester II students, however, were more inclined to believe that although being positive was helpful of relationships, they also had to let students know that there were rules and, if students could not follow them, there were consequences.

Perceptions of relationships with teacher associates produced some divergence among the two groups. Professional Semester I students identified being positive, respectful, and encouraging as major themes. Some similar themes were important for

Professional Semester II students, but being respectful was only mentioned once. Their major focus was on being positive and encouraging. Apparently, as their teaching assignments grew, Professional Semester II students were looking for more encouragement, positive support, and feedback. Moreover, these preservice teachers wanted their teacher associates to give feedback, in the form of *how can we make your lessons better*, rather than *telling me what was bad or what went wrong in a negative manner*.

When it came to their understanding of the teaching profession, Professional Semester I student teachers had two main areas of focus: they felt they should like children and really like to help students to succeed. Professional Semester II student teachers were more global in their views of the teaching profession. They, too, spoke of liking children and helping children to succeed but they placed greater importance on such things as the rewards teaching brought, and the feeling that every day was different.

When it came to recognizing student teacher needs, classroom management was high for both groups. As well, Professional Semester II students also mentioned frequently the need for a greater variety of teaching strategies. The focus for them was on more practical needs, needs more typical of the regular classroom teacher.

Regarding their perceptions of their teaching responsibilities, Professional Semester I student teachers wanted to be able to teach for understanding, and they wanted to be able to create a safe environment for their students. Professional Semester II students overwhelmingly felt that teaching for understanding was of utmost importance.

Andrew (1997) suggests that eventually students realize academic skills and interpersonal qualities are essential to good teaching. Clearly, in their more advance practicum, these student teachers felt greater pressure to cover the curriculum well.

Conclusion

An initial conclusion of this project is that there are many similarities in needs and feelings between Professional Semester I and Professional Semester II preservice teachers. In my search I was seeking differences that would assist in answering my questions. As the project unfolded I noticed that many answers were to be found in the similarities between the two practica.

In my initial research I found that many researchers, including Offutt (1995), felt that attitude and interpersonal factors were affected especially by mentors, and that attitudes change over time through the practicum experience. It was suggested that content knowledge and subject matter were rated lower than personal attributes in other researchers' studies, as student teachers passed through the different practicum stages.

When I filtered through the data I was struck by the similarities in personal qualities that Professional Semester I and Professional Semester II students saw as being highly valued in a classroom teacher. Both groups agreed that one must be caring and patient, and love teaching. Most practicum students rated personal attributes in similar ways, suggesting that they personally realize teachers must have these qualities to be effective. They also believed they needed these qualities or, more to the point, needed to develop and use these qualities throughout their practica experiences.

Certainly some attitudes changed, as did some thought processes as student teachers moved through practica. The Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge, through an extensive practica program, allows preservice teachers access to varied and thorough teaching experiences. That in itself enables preservice teachers an opportunity to see certain situations time and again, which can assist in their developing

more mature thoughts and actions. The extensive practica experiences, together with continued academic study on-campus, make it more likely that student teachers will be able to develop and refine the qualities that make a successful teacher before they complete the teacher education program.

There are differences in the content and expectations of each professional semester which appear to be consistent with preservice teachers' apparent needs at that particular time. For instance, Professional Semester I student teachers were preoccupied with how to plan, and develop a teaching style. They were much less concerned with evaluating students' learning. On the other hand, Professional Semester II student teachers were more concerned with classroom management, content knowledge, teaching style, and how to evaluate what students were taught. Clearly, as they move through the preservice teaching experiences, student teachers evolve appropriately. This evolution is specific to each individual but does follow, at varying capacities and rates, a common path.

Many of the personal characteristics identified by all respondents as being important to a classroom teacher are seen as being integral to expectations of success in the Faculty of Education's program. Through a balance of academic and practical, each student teacher either develops or enhances those qualities, or experiences varying degrees of difficulty throughout the practica experiences.

In terms of teaching, preservice teachers perceived themselves as moving from trying to survive to refining their craft. This program can be thought of as helping student teachers move from egocentric concerns to a more global approach; from a concern with self to a concern for others; from an understanding of teaching as technique to an

understanding of teaching as a profession; and from a preoccupation with dissemination to a concern for learning.

Most student teachers had concerns over classroom management, teaching styles, and content knowledge. In particular, they felt the program could do more to help them in these areas. However, it may be that no amount of preservice preparation can take the place of actual teaching experiences in developing certain critical dimensions of the teacher's repertoire.

In conjunction with extensive practica experiences for all student teachers, the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge provides developmentally-appropriate academic content through Professional Semester I components and Professional Semester II courses. All elements appear to be extremely useful for preservice teachers. Most respondents provided evidence of their growing awareness that many of the technical skills which allow student teachers to be effective are taught, developed and nurtured over time. Through a purposeful, step-by-step process, combined with continued academic study and practical experiences, student teachers grow and evolve; they become stronger, more efficient, and effective teachers. Curriculum and Instruction was viewed as being the most important on-campus components for both groups while modules and courses that showed clear connections between theory and practice were more important for Professional Semester I student teachers and Evaluation was more important for Professional Semester II student teachers. An overwhelming majority of respondents concur that the Faculty of Education's program is meeting most of the needs of student teachers, and the profession, except in the areas of classroom management and teaching strategies.

Those student teachers who are not successful or are ill-suited to the profession appear to fall into three main categories: those with an inability to acquire the necessary technical skills for the profession; those who have made an inappropriate career choices; and those whose personal circumstances (health, finances, family issues) create an interruption or a halt to their program.

Given the research in this area, the University of Lethbridge is providing an essential breadth of opportunity for preservice teachers to not only gain experience teaching, but also to evolve cognitively in terms of their perceptions of teaching.

Recommendations

1. The Faculty of Education continue to develop and refine course and module workshops to assist students in classroom management content appropriate to the needs of student teachers at all levels of practica.
2. The Faculty of Education continue to improve communication between instructors and students to demonstrate that all the various components of on-campus study and practica experiences are integrally connected to effective teaching and success in the teaching profession.
3. There is a need for closer liaison between the Faculty of Education members and teacher associates so both partners can be more aware of issues in classrooms today.
4. There is a need for a more systematic process of recruitment, preparation, and continuing inservice for new and experienced teacher associates.
5. Executive Members of the Education Undergraduate Society (EUS) in the Faculty of Education in conjunction with Board Members of the South Western Alberta Teachers' Convention Association have worked hard planning workshops

specifically designed for preservice teachers – Classroom Management Tips for New Teachers. The EUS executive should be encouraged to continue offering these workshops, as well as others that students feel necessary and beneficial in their teacher preparation development.

6. There is a need to continue and expand the work of this pilot study, to create a rich and more accessible database of needs, perceptions, successes, and changes in the professional experiences of students and teachers who form part of the great community of learners that make up the past, present, and future of the Faculty of Education.

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Appendix A

Field Experiences Statistics

Professional Semester I and II

<u>Semester</u>	<u>Incompletes</u>	<u>Failures</u>	<u>Medical Incompletes</u>	<u>Withdrawals</u>
Fall 1998	2	4	0	0
Spring 1999	6	5	2	2
Fall 1999	0	1	1	1
Spring 2000	4	0	1	8
Fall 2000	1	0	0	2
Spring 2001	5	0	0	2
Fall 2001	1	0	0	2
Spring 2002	2	0	1	2
Fall 2002	0	1	0	0
Spring 2003	5	1	2	3

Appendix B

Interview Consent Form

Date

Dear Student Teacher:

I am a graduate student at the University of Lethbridge conducting a study entitled, "What Makes a Successful Student Teacher?". The purpose of this study is to explore student teachers' perceptions and Teacher Associates' perceptions of what makes a successful student teacher.

As part of this research I will need to conduct two one-hour interviews with you. These interviews will add further understanding and insight to the data collected through previous research. I have attached a copy of my interview guide for your perusal. Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. When responses are released, they will be reported in summary form only. Names and any other identifying information will not be included in any discussion of the results.

The study has received the approval of the Faculty Human Subject Research Committee. Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without prejudice. If you agree to these interviews, please complete and sign the bottom portion of this letter.

I appreciate your assistance in this matter. If you have any questions please call me at the University of Lethbridge at 329-2448 or call Dr. David Townsend at 329-2731, or the Chair of the Human Subjects Research Committee Dr. Richard Butt at 329-2434.

Yours sincerely,

Shari Platt

Please detach and forward the signed portion.

What Makes a Successful Student Teacher?

I agree to participate in this study by allowing Shari Platt to conduct two one-hour interviews with me concerning my perceptions of what factors, qualities, or characteristics makes a successful student teacher.

Name

Signature

Date

Appendix C

Interview Guide

Student Teacher Interviews -- Professional Semester I

What Makes a Successful Student Teacher During a Teacher Education Program?

1. Why did you choose teaching as a profession?
2. How is teaching different from other jobs or professions?
3. What expectations did you have of your program at The University of Lethbridge before you entered the Faculty of Education?
4. What components of the program did you find most useful or helpful in your first semester of the teacher preparation program?
5. Tell me about your practicum in Professional Semester I.
 - a. In what grade(s) did you teach?
6. Were you comfortable teaching at that level? Why?
7. How do you feel that you were received in your classroom
 - a. by the students?
 - b. by the teacher associate?
8. What was your greatest challenge? How did you meet it?
9. What types of interactions did you have with your students outside the classroom?
How did these interactions affect your teaching?
10. How would you describe your relationship with your students at the end of PS I?
11. What was the most important thing you learned from your students?
12. What was the most important thing you learned from your teacher colleagues in the school?

13. What was the most important thing you learned from your university instructors?
14. What do you consider to be your **personal** strengths that contribute most to your teaching?
15. What do you consider to be your greatest **professional** strengths?
16. What do you consider to be the three most necessary traits a successful teacher possesses?
17. What do you believe are your primary responsibilities as a teacher?
18. How would you describe the quality of preparation you had for your practicum?
19. How would you evaluate your performance in your practicum?
20. Are there any changes you would like to make to enhance your teaching performance for your next professional semester?
21. Do you have any additional comments to make about your experiences as a student teacher?

Appendix D

Interview Guide

Student Teacher Interviews -- Professional Semester II

What Makes a Successful Student Teacher During a Teacher Education Program?

1. Since your PS I experience can you expand on why you chose teaching as a profession?
2. Has your experience in P.S. II given you more insights into how teaching is different from other jobs or professions?
3. What expectations did you have regarding what you felt you needed to know or learn to be successful in PS II?
4. Describe how these expectations were met?
5. Was there a component of the program that you found to be more useful or helpful in your second semester of the teacher preparation program?
6. Tell me about your practicum in Professional Semesters II.
 - a. What grade level(s) were you placed in?
 - b. How would you describe the quality of preparation you had for your practicum?
7. Were you comfortable teaching at each grade level? Why?
8. How do you feel that you were received in your classroom
 - a. by the students?
 - b. by the teacher associate?
9. What was your greatest challenge? How did you meet it?
10. How would you describe your relationship with your students at the end of PS II?

11. What types of interactions did you have with your students outside the classroom?
How did these interactions affect your teaching?
12. What do you consider to be your **personal** strengths that contribute most to your teaching?
13. What do you consider to be your greatest **professional** strengths?
14. Are there any personal or professional strengths you feel student teachers need to be successful?
15. What do you consider to be the three most necessary traits a successful teacher possesses?
16. What was the most important thing you learned from your students?
17. What was the most important thing you learned from your colleagues in the school?
18. What was the most important thing you learned from your university instructors?
19. What do you believe are your primary responsibilities as a teacher?
20. How did this practicum differ from your P.S. I practicum?
21. Was your focus in this practicum different than in P.S. I? In what way? Where did you find your focus to be in this practicum?
22. How would you evaluate your performance in your practicum?
23. How could your practicum have been made better?
24. Are there any changes you would like to make in your teaching style for your next professional semester? Any changes to your planning? Changes to your presentation? Are there any changes you would like to make to enhance your teaching performance for your next professional semester?

25. Do you have any additional comments to make about your experiences as a student teacher?

Appendix E

Survey Guide

Teacher Associate Survey

What Makes a Successful Student Teacher During a Teacher Education Program?

1. In order of priority please list five **personal** characteristics of successful student teachers?

2. In order of priority please list five **professional** characteristics of successful student teachers?

3. What were the most obvious personal and professional characteristics your student teacher exhibited over the course of the practicum?

4. Did your student teacher's attitude towards students change during this practicum experience? Please explain your answer.

5. Did your student teacher's attitude towards teaching change over the course of the practicum experience? Please explain your answer.

6. Do you believe the teacher preparation program at The University of Lethbridge is instilling in its students appropriate attitudes towards teaching? Please explain your answer?

7. What do you consider to be some personal and professional characteristics that hinder success in student teaching?

8. Do you believe the teacher preparation program at The University of Lethbridge is providing its students with the skills and knowledge that best equip them for success in student teaching? Please explain your answer.

