

**AN EXPERIMENT IN REGIONALIZATION
OF P.S.1
MEDICINE HAT PROJECT**

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I. **INTRODUCTION**

Educational systems are more concerned about teacher education now than at any time in recent history. Reform movements and initiatives appear to parallel and foreshadow recent restructuring of general education and are widely focused on issues of effectiveness, utility, philosophy and even fundamental purpose. Many critics feel it is imperative to prepare new professionals for the increasingly complex and diverse demands of public education, but as educators attempt to respond to such challenges they are confronted with differing visualizations of the future of public education and the changing functions of our educational system. At present, a bewildering number of teacher education programs seek to ensure that their graduates receive the most benefit from teacher education courses and practicum placements; strive to understand more fully the learning process involved in student teaching; and continue to explore alternative teacher education practices.

In order to develop and restructure teacher education programs, it may be essential to listen to the voices of pre-service teachers. Their thoughts about teaching should be of great importance. Inquiries into the thoughts of student teachers can provide valuable insights into the impact of teacher education programs and assist in developing ways that programs may be improved to better prepare new teachers for their diverse roles and responsibilities (Gormley, Hammer, McDermott & Rothenberg, 1993). Not surprisingly, a fair amount of recent research does focus on aspiring teachers' beliefs, perspectives and prior conceptions.

The University of Lethbridge has continued its tradition of innovation in teacher education with the development of a carefully designed off-campus program, offering

selected students in their first Professional Semester (P.S.1) an opportunity to complete all their P.S.1 requirements at a distance from the University. This experiment in regionalization officially commenced September, 1995 in Medicine Hat, Alberta.

During the summer of 1995, the University of Lethbridge invited three school districts in the Medicine Hat area to become participants in implementing the University of Lethbridge off-campus pilot project. Two school districts realized the benefits of participating in such an endeavour and cooperated with the University of Lethbridge. Many meetings were held. School district personnel, school representatives and Faculty of Education members shared responsibility for the development of the project. A one-day planning session in August, attended by representatives of future supervisory teachers, school administrators, associate instructors, faculty, and district administrators succeeded in putting together all the essential details of the students' timetables, instruction schedules and practicum placements. This was a first rate example of genuine collaboration and shared decision-making.

Twenty-seven Professional Semester 1 students enrolled in this project and were assigned field placements in Medicine Hat District #76 and Prairie Rose Regional Division #8. Peer groups consisting of four to seven students were placed in one of five elementary and junior high schools. In addition, the Professional Semester 1 students attended courses at Elm Street School in Medicine Hat, Alberta. This "home school" was designated as a site for instruction of the University of Lethbridge Professional Semester 1 modules.

On the first day of the new semester these students met in Lethbridge with all the

other new admissions to P.S.1. For the next two days they were in their practicum placements for orientation. Over the following ten days they attended P.S.1 classes at Elm Street. Then for the next five weeks the students were in their school placements in the morning and attended classes in the afternoon. Approximately midway through the practicum that order was changed to allow students to be in class in the morning and return to student teaching in the afternoon.

On the same day that children attended their first day of school Professional Semester I students attended "first day of school" orientation, and stayed for the next day. At this time the student teachers were introduced to prospective pupils, teacher associates, staff members and their student teacher peers, providing they were involved in a paired placement.

I became involved in this project near the end of its first month in operation. After discussing the Medicine Hat cohort pilot project with my graduate studies faculty advisor, I became intrigued by the nature, structure and design of this novel educational plan. My participation in graduate level courses had illuminated teaching and learning in a distinctive way and allowed me to reflect critically on my own pedagogical style and teaching behaviour. As a result, I felt I could relate to this experimental process, apply educational research and theories to the study of this program design, and seek to incorporate continuous scholarship, renewing my own metaorientation to the teaching profession. While I had the feeling that this study might have significance for educators generally, I was quite sure it would contribute to my continued professional development as a teacher.

A. Rationale

The University of Lethbridge off-campus pilot project has run for one semester of teacher education in Medicine Hat and some detailed investigation and analysis of what happened has been undertaken. In order to determine the effectiveness, function and practicality of this program, it is extremely important to evaluate, among other things, the insights, goals and perspectives of the individuals involved, particularly the students. My involvement in this aspect of evaluation has offered me a unique opportunity to listen to those future teachers and explore with them their perceptions of the pilot project.

How we introduce our future teachers to life as professionals is an important dimension of teacher education. Listening to the recommendations, ideas, opinions and concerns of student teachers may assist the University of Lethbridge faculty in understanding, improving or refining the education of prospective teachers.

B. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research project is to examine the perspectives, ideas and general attitudes of Professional Semester 1 students participating in the University of Lethbridge off-campus education program, in order to assess its strengths and weaknesses. It is hoped that the information gained from this study will assist University of Lethbridge educators in understanding the value, effectiveness and importance of this type of program. As well, the study should show where changes need to be made or assumptions re-examined.

C. Research Questions

1) What are the insights and perspectives of student teachers involved in the University of Lethbridge off-campus process of teacher education?

Many student teachers were assigned student teacher peers. It is important not to dismiss this cooperative professional venture. Peer centered options may be effective for student teacher growth. Therefore, one additional question will be addressed in this study.

2) How do student teachers participating in the University of Lethbridge off-campus teacher preparation programs perceive the contributions of their student peers in the process of learning to teach?

II. METHODOLOGY

Faced with the problem of gaining access to the perspectives of student teachers, I employed a two-fold method of data collection. One phase of collecting data consisted of asking P.S.1 students to rank their responses on a questionnaire. A second phase of data collection centered on a series of eleven interviews conducted with individuals, pairs and groups of students.

A. The Instruments & Research Design

The Professional Semester 1 students completed an existing Professional Semester 1 Student Questionnaire formulated at the University of Lethbridge in Spring, 1993 (Appendix A). These questions elicited students' opinions regarding their participation in the Medicine Hat off-campus cohort program. An additional set of open ended questions was designed to ascertain areas of strength, concern and connectedness that the Likert items might have obscured. The questionnaires were distributed in person to the students

in their various school placements in and around Medicine Hat. The students were asked to complete the P.S.1 Student Questionnaire at the time of delivery in order to avoid lost questionnaires and valuable data. Twenty-one questionnaires were completed and returned for analysis.

B. The Interviews

Sixteen questions (Appendix B) were developed to be used during interviews with student teachers. Eleven interviews were conducted. In these interviews P.S.1 students were asked to provide in as much detail as they could, their impression of the P.S.1 off-campus cohort program. All Professional Semester 1 students were given the opportunity to participate in the interview process. Nineteen students accepted the challenge to respond to the interview questions. These P.S.1 students were grouped in many different ways. Eight students requested individual interviews; two P.S.1 students interviewed together as a pair; five students from one school interviewed as a group; and four additional P.S.1 student teachers from one school agreed to the interview process. Of the nineteen respondents, eight were male and eleven were female. The P.S.1 students provided answers, clarified their view points and conscientiously reflected upon the prepared questions.

C. Sample

I had the opportunity to meet and briefly discuss the nature of this study with the students participating in Professional Semester 1 off-campus program. All twenty-seven P.S.1 students expressed a willingness to participate. Consent letters (Appendix C) were signed before the students completed questionnaires and participated in the interview

process.

Letters of explanation and "Consent Letter" (Appendix D) were sent to six of the Professional Semester 1 instructors. All six instructors approved of the P.S.1 students completing the "Professional Semester 1 Student Questionnaire" (Appendix A). The instructors were also interested in reviewing the results and analysis of the data, once compiled.

D. Design

This study is descriptive in nature. All data were collected through the use of interviews and questionnaires.

The questionnaire elicited many comments and provided a numerical value to determine the perspectives held by P.S.1 students. The quantitative data were collected, summarized and arranged in tables. Written comments were analyzed and summarized into three main categories, consisting of positive aspects of various P.S.1 modules, negative aspects, and general comments.

The structured interviews conducted with groups of P.S.1 students lasted from twenty to fifty minutes. These interviews were held at a convenient time in the schools where the students had their practicum placements. Prior to the interview session, the P.S.1 students were notified once again that the interviews would be audio-taped and informed that the audio-tape would be temporarily discontinued upon request of any one P.S.1 student. The interviewing sessions were not suspended for any reasons and provided an enjoyable yet thorough account of P.S.1 students' perspectives regarding the off-campus pilot project. These audio-tapes were later transcribed for analysis.

One hundred fifty-seven typed pages of materials were generated from the taped interviews. The first step in the data analysis was to analyze the transcripts for comments related to the students' perspectives of the P.S.1 cohort program. By carefully reading the transcripts and continually reassessing the data presented, I discovered that six distinct categories or themes emerged. I compared these themes with the literature in the field.

The socialization process in learning to teach was a common theme. Other themes include communication; structure and organization; linking theory and practice; pedagogy; governance/politics and university partnerships. These areas of focus correspond broadly to the themes of professional growth among student teachers as described in the literature. Criteria for coding student teachers' response to the interview question items were the following:

Socialization (1)

I coded responses 1 when student teachers described feelings relating to the socialization process. The emphasis of responses in this category is on the student teachers' reflections on working together as a team or becoming a community of learners.

Examples of responses coded 1 include:

- We're like a big family.
- We're a very close group and it's bonded us.
- We've also socialized with some teachers and the staff at our school.

Communication, Collegiality and Collaborative Journey (2)

I coded responses 2 when student teachers described opinions about the collaborative nature and collegial efforts of the student teaching process. Examples of responses include:

- We had a real support system.
- It's nice when your student teacher peer teaches before you.
- The professors were very approachable.

Structure and Organization (3)

I coded responses 3 when P.S.1 students described their perspectives with regards to the organization of the student teaching practicum and program in general. Examples of responses coded 3 include:

- Take a few quirks out and it probably will be a good program.
- Some courses overlapped in some ways.
- A few little hassles contributed to my frustration.

Linking Theory and Practice (4)

I coded responses 4 when student teachers responses focused on linking theory and practice. Examples of responses coded 4 include:

- It worked well when we could apply what we were taught in class.
- I'm the kind of person, I'll read my text and forget it. But they say if you apply what you learn, you know it's something you'll always know.

Pedagogy (5)

I coded three types of items in category 5. The first are those responses that discussed the workload of the student teaching experience. The second referred to course content and instruction. I also coded as a 5, comments that referred to student teachers learning to become a teacher. Examples of responses coded as a 5 include:

- It makes me realize I've gotten across to a student.
- The kids seemed to understand.

Governance/Politics and University Partnerships (6)

I coded responses 6 when respondents referred to specific statements relating to politics and governing structures of the P.S.1 cohort program. Examples include the following:

- The University needed a higher awareness that we were here.
- There was stuff said at a meeting that I think caused some bad feelings.

Each response was coded (1-6) and highlighted with a marker. Later, these responses were classified and arranged onto large chart paper. Once the themes were organized, I carefully analyzed the information and related it to the literature in the field. I used excerpts from the transcripts of the interviews to support and illustrate points in each theme. I have added punctuation and made minor grammatical changes to facilitate the reading of conversational speech.

III. RESULTS, COMMENTARY AND ANALYSIS

The transcribed interview tapes were perused for content that was eventually organized into themes. The specific student statements relative to each theme have been grouped in the order indicated in each Theme Title Page. Subsequently references to appropriate literature, authors and research are included to summarize or confirm the expressed sentiments in each Theme.

A. Analysis of Interviews

Theme I

The Socialization Process

The Students' Metaphorical Language

- ▶ strength in numbers
- ▶ team effort - team approach
- ▶ development of leaders
- ▶ we're a community/learning occurred within ourselves
- ▶ we've all bonded
- ▶ cohesion
- ▶ we're always together - the U. of L. Gang
- ▶ like a big family
- ▶ thrown into this together
- ▶ feel like this island over here
- ▶ engaging/interacting
- ▶ socially isolated

Theme I

Socialization

One of the strongest themes emerging from the data is that the Medicine Hat cohort P.S.1 students felt fortunate to have developed a sense of shared experience and intellectual community (Su, 1990). The students developed a real sense of identity and group dynamics. They felt empowered to take on the responsibility of sharing ideas, resources, teaching strategies, emotional concerns and personal experiences. This community of learners offered the following comments.

"What I found generally with our big group, is that we were kind of like a community and we've learned within our own selves. We're kind of like our own staff. We've done a lot of working and helping out one another and its given us a good idea of what it is like in the real world kind of thing - teaching."

"We're like a big family. It's very personal and it felt like us having more attention- being a team."

"This weekend we had an assignment due. We all got together and did it! Everyone is so willing to help one another. It's a new feeling in University for me."

"I can't put it in one word. It's just like we're a little community. We all help each other out."

"We're the same group. Boy does that ever encourage, can you look at my paper? What do you think about this lesson? Do you think this will work? What do you feel? Are you the same on this as I am?"

This socialization process developed a support system and sense of cohesion whereby student teachers could confide in one another. Often they would share concerns and provide emotional support. Feelings such as mutual respect, trust and collegiality

were apparent.

"We're very close in the group and it's bonded us. We've all bonded. Actually it's more than just your teaching partner, it's the group."

"We're strength in numbers - support wise. We're always there. If there was a problem, we'll phone somebody and ask, "Look, I don't understand this assignment. Can you help me?"

"Sometimes all we had was each other."

"It is the support system we're dependent on - where we could just phone up someone."

"There's a closeness with our group that I know we wouldn't be able to get at the university."

"I don't think that sort of thing will happen in smaller groups or groups that change because there's a certain amount of trust that goes on. I think that's one of the reasons it was so beneficial to us. We had a really strong group."

Many permanent friends, lasting ties and friendships outside the confines of the classroom developed as a result of the Medicine Hat off-campus program. Many students met their fellow students informally outside of regular classes. During these times, students would often reflect on and discuss issues relevant to their teaching/learning experiences. As well, it was a time to relax and enjoy the company of each other.

"Like we're all friends outside of this too, so we're always talking."

"I think if you were to take a Myers-Brigg Personality test or whatever and take us individually, it would be like, "These guys are like magnets, they do nothing in their opposites. We're always together - it's like the U. of L. gang."

"We were sort of thrown in to be together and I was able to meet a lot of nice people."

"I don't think I would have had this level of interaction if I were in Lethbridge. I don't think I would have even had the after hours social life

with all the other students, I'd probably go home and hang out with my own friends. I think it's been really good for me personally to socialize especially with people who are going to be future colleagues."

"I hope this friendship continues."

"If I could wrap it up in one word, I would say I enjoyed the closeness and friendship. Individual attention."

"I think that the group itself is a great group of student teachers. Very good friends. I will have colleagues forever because I know them all personally, on a personal level."

The Medicine Hat P.S.1 students felt a sense of professional socialization - a close knit, caring group. This cohort experience has assisted the students in realizing the collegial/collaborative nature of teaching.

"We're kind of like our own staff. We've done a lot of working and helping out each other and it's given us a good idea of what it is like in the real world kind of thing - teaching."

"We will be better teachers because we were out here."

"We've also socialized with some of the teachers and the staff at our school and with a lot of our instructors. It's been a really good experience!"

"One night I was introducing a unit and I couldn't figure out how to do it, so I phoned up a colleague and said, "I have to introduce a new unit tomorrow and I don't know how to do it. Will you help me?" And she said, "Yeah. And while we're on the topic, what do you think of this?"

"I had my mind made up and that was it, and this is what I must do. I realize with teaching you can't do that. It's all a team effort and staff is very important."

"I think on numerous occasions I phoned my instructors. They were on the same level as us - just teachers wanting to help out teachers I guess. They made us feel like we were their equals, not someone to put up on a pedestal."

The development of a strong peer culture reinforced a sense of group

communication. Many students shared experiences, discussed problems confronting them in their everyday life as students and shared their beliefs regarding teaching and learning. As well, many students learned the value of effective communication and the importance of interacting with one another.

"We would get into arguments but we have to let go. I'm not dismissing the whole person. You can't do that, in a small group, you just can't afford to do that. You have to learn how to say "I don't like what you say, it's not that I don't like you."

"We're a vocal group. When we disagreed with something the instructors said, we let them know. Whereas I spent my entire B.A. last year at the university, and you were just a number and you didn't dare say anything."

"You had to ask a lot of questions. You really keep on asking, sometimes we didn't get our questions answered... This program, I think, developed a lot of leaders." "Those that didn't develop into leaders became a lot more assertive."

One student interviewed did not feel part of the total tightness of the group, although this student felt satisfied with the socialization process.

Another student felt, "The group of 27 students was at first more tightly wound. As time progressed it kind of digressed and got away from that because of individual things. People got to know each other more... But overall, most everybody got along."

It was observed by Zhixin Su (1990) that, "In some of the programs visited, teacher candidates started out as a group, and peer influence was stronger at the beginning of their programs. However, as they progressed through individual specialties and took different courses, students became more separated from one another with little access to group support. When the time for student teaching came, some of the programs tried to place student teachers in clusters. Nonetheless, most student teachers lost contact with those with whom they had studied earlier."

Perhaps with time, people begin to socialize with groups of people holding similar beliefs and orientations.

The Literature in Review

Researchers have written about the socialization process and social situation each student teacher experiences in the formal preparation program and the beginning of teachers' professional experience. Research is beginning to show that classroom experience, student teaching in particular, does result in a change of orientations of teachers (Hoy & Rees, 1977). Many researchers have made reference to the socialization process and are listed below.

The research included on socialization summarizes and confirms the responses of the P.S.1 students.

Zhixin, Su (1990)

The Function of the Peer Group in Teacher Socialization

"Individual changes in attitudes, values and motives are based on a group consensus. The peer group can also help to reduce strain and alleviate tension, thereby easing an individual's entry in the organization or profession" (p.723).

"The function of the peer group in the socialization of teachers is in general very weak. Teacher candidates are not encouraged by their programs to develop a strong peer culture. By design and by default, great numbers of future teachers are being socialized into the belief and practice that teaching is largely an isolated and individualistic activity, rather than a shared enterprise" (p.726).

Wayne K. Hoy & Richard Kees (1977)

The Bureaucratic Socialization of Student Teachers

"The problem of the education of teachers may be a much more complex one than restructuring the curriculum. Much of what is learned about teaching is ultimately learned in the context of the school organization" (p.25).

"The school bureaucracy quickly begins to impress upon them the value of conformity, impersonality, tradition, subordination and bureaucratic loyalty" (p.25).

Zeichner et al, 1987

"Research during the last decade has demonstrated that the formal aspects of preservice preparation do little to alter students' outlooks and practices, whereas the less formal, experiential aspects of student teaching are potentially significant influences."

John I. Goodlad (1990)
Teachers for our Nations Schools

"Cohort groups of students who stay together with teams of faculty members throughout their entire preparation programs should be carefully selected and educated."

John I. Goodlad (1991)
Why We Need a Complete Redesign of Teacher Education

"There is no clear entry point for students. They wander in and out of preparation courses, often taking three or more before declaring themselves candidates to get their student teaching placements. The socialization process is weak" (p.6).

B. Robert Tobachnick & Kenneth M. Zeichner (1984)
The Impact of the Student Teaching Experience on the Development of Teacher Perspectives.

"Student teachers for the most part were able to control the direction of their socialization and develop more elaborated versions of the perspectives that were evident at the beginning of the semester, are contrary to the conventional wisdom in the field and to the results of numerous studies indicating that student teachers' attitudes and perspectives are significantly altered during student teaching" (p.34).

"The nature of supervision in this program also encouraged students to clarify their perspectives toward teaching and probably, to develop in a direction consistent with their entering perspectives. The weekly student teaching seminars with supervisors, the "inquiry-oriented" field assignments that students were required to complete, and the student teacher journals that formed an essential part of the supervisory process generally encouraged greater clarity about the substance of teaching perspectives and a reflective or analytic stance toward teaching practice. They also pushed students to employ personal discretion and independent judgement in their work. All of this suggests that under certain conditions it may be possible to help student teachers control their situations rather than being passively controlled by them" (p.35).

Dan Lortie (1975)
Schoolteacher: A Sociology Study

Lortie argues that the socialization of teachers occurs largely through the internalization of teaching models during the thousands of hours spent as pupils in close contact with teachers. In Lortie's view, it is the activation of the "latent culture" within the onset of school experience that is the major influence in shaping students' conceptions of the teaching role and role performance. Student teaching and classroom practice is seen as having little effect in comparison to the influence of pre-training experiences.

Kenneth M. Zeichner/Daniel P. Leston
Teaching Students to Reflect

"Student teaching should be a time to reinforce the view that student teaching is a time for continual learning about teaching and schooling and for establishing pedagogical habits of self-directed growth rather than a time merely for the application and demonstration of previously acquired knowledge and skills. It seeks to reinforce the view that teachers can be creators as well as consumers of educational knowledge" (p.31).

Theme II

Communication/Collegiality and a Collaborative Journey

The Students' Metaphorical Language

- ▶ didn't have a voice yet
- ▶ students learn through language
- ▶ every teacher is a teacher of language
- ▶ finding our ground - where do you step?
Where do I step?
- ▶ honing in on her ground
- ▶ broken through the barrier
- ▶ opened my eyes
- ▶ getting over that big wall
- ▶ use peer as a backboard and bounce your ideas off
- ▶ feedback

Theme II

Communication/Collaboration/Collegiality

The second major theme emerging from the data is the collaborative and collegial effort of various stakeholders relating and networking together to facilitate student teacher growth and learning.

Communication and Collaboration Between Student Teacher Peers

The majority of student teachers believed that by working closely with a peer they began to develop an emotional support system. Many P.S.1 student teachers felt a developing confidence and demonstrated a growing trust in each other. On several occasions the students would articulate their own individual thoughts and beliefs on what they do in their teaching, making them somewhat more analytical.

"My teacher peer will say, this is where I got it and this is what I do with it. She's been really helpful. Mostly talking about teaching and she asks some things, Oh, she'll say, oh, can I have that for my books?"

"It helps because my teacher associate allows us to evaluate each other. For example, in period 2 today I will be writing observation notes on her. I really get to learn the other end of the deal. Trying to evaluate someone else which I thought was very hard. And she evaluates me. Sometimes she sees things for me that my teacher adviser doesn't or that I don't see in myself. It's been really helpful because there's somebody else there with all that knowledge too that I can go to. Not just to my T.A., but my peer. So I've really enjoyed it. We get along very well."

"I found Pat and I had some similar concerns. Many different things went on in class, and just being able to discuss it was great."

"A real support system."

"You know your peer is going to be honest with you - like, "You did mess that up, how do you think you could have done that better?" They can tell

you as a friend and a peer - it doesn't hurt as much."

"If you ever did have a bad day where you said that was just a horrible lesson, the other person was always there. You know whether it was convincing or not. "Don't worry about it - tomorrow's another day. We'll get over it."

It was stated by various student teachers that working together developed a greater sense of risk taking in their teaching strategies.

"It's nice when your peer has to teach before you and she tries something that's "on the list." That one didn't work either. Sacrificial lambs!"

"It's good, because what worked for her I could try. I tried to apply that in my teaching and my lessons and so forth. So it was great. We learned from each other.

It was also stated that student teachers enjoyed the interaction since they felt equal status in their pedagogical style and ability to teach.

"My teacher associate, after teaching 17 years, has got everything down. I can't really relate to that too much because I can't do that. I wish I could, but I can't. So I can watch her (student teacher peer) and see how she prepares and does her classes."

"It's motivated me. I worked with an excellent student teacher. Joy and I teach together and I look at her and I want to be like her, so she motivates me to teach. She's excellent. I've had a great practical experience."

Many student teachers enjoyed the opportunity to work as team teachers. It provided an opportunity to work with another on a common theme in the classroom - helping students.

"If she's busy and it looks like the students need help, I help out and the same goes for her. If she's teaching a lesson like map lessons and all the kids are working on different maps, we just help out."

"I know with Sue and I, when one of us was teaching the other is basically assisting and that is great because you're not on your own. Sometimes our

teacher associate would be out of the room, or she'll be observing us. To have someone "get the pencil" for someone that doesn't have ... or just do those little things."

"Being able to watch someone learning the same things helps me in deciding how to cope with the students and their behaviours."

Many student teachers felt a sense of competitiveness during the initial stages of the practicum. However, as they began working more closely with a peer, this competition changed more to motivation, thereby making a more productive contribution to their professional development. By collaborating, networking and growing together, students were able to fashion an atmosphere of trust and communication.

"At first it was sort of uncomfortable. I didn't know if I felt comfortable having another student in the class because you already feel stressed and pressured and there's somebody watching you and evaluating you. But after awhile, I was worried that it might get competitive, but it didn't. But there was a little underlying competition that I think really pushed us. We could bounce ideas off each other. So I was learning from her just as much as my T.A."

"At first it was like, "I really didn't want to do that." But as the semester has gone on, I think we're more into cooperating and get good ideas from each other and talk about problems we're having with students. At first it was competition and I think it is, just from talking to other people who are placed with someone else. They felt that at first too."

Even though student teachers enjoyed the collaborative nature of their paired placements, there were some concerns. The majority of students felt the time commitment during student teaching was difficult to meet. A great number of students felt it was challenging getting an equal amount of time student teaching. As well, the students felt it was very difficult managing time to student teach particularly in the afternoons, with instructional minutes shortened. The time issue was even more pronounced if the paired students

majored in the same subject area. It was noted that the pressure was heightened when a P.S.III student was involved in the student teaching process.

"So all of a sudden you're in with four teachers. And so I basically backed off; it's the only thing I could do."

"It's really difficult...we're both social studies major so that's really tough because we would both teach as much social studies as we could and social studies is only in the afternoons. So when in the afternoons and full days we really had to split that and it doesn't allow for a lot of time. I think that if there are going to be paired placements, make sure that they're different subject majors."

"And of course you have to split up time so this meant Jane was using up time to consult and then I would have to try and fit in there sometime to consult. So it was a little bit of time pressure sometimes. It worked out."

"I don't think this is a disadvantage, but just something to take into consideration is that there are three teachers trying to teach in one classroom. And it's been really hard for me to try and get my time in. It's taken some real time managing to get us all to teach. Especially with the P.S.III student, she has to teach half time right? And I'm teaching 1/3 time."

"A lot of time I would only get to watch a P.S.III student teach."

A few students I interviewed did not enjoy the benefits of collaborating and working with their student teacher peers. They felt there was excessive competition and various personality conflicts. It must be noted that these student endeavoured to work out their differences.

"We sat down together and talked about it and that's where it came from that we would just basically be individuals within the classroom. When it was our time to teach, the other person would have their prep time. We would watch as the T.A. taught. That would be our observing time."

"Well, for me it has taught me how to work with someone...I have a pretty dry sense of humour and I'm quite sarcastic and I've learned that you can't be like that with everyone. So I've made changes and I've adapted and I'm sure she's done the same."

Communication and Collaboration with Instructors

Communication between the instructors and student teachers encouraged reflection, discussion and inquiry-oriented interaction. The open lines of communication between students and instructors provided for positive learning experiences. Students teachers were able to form personal relationships with instructors which fostered an atmosphere of trust and openness. It presented the student teachers an avenue and opportunity for professional growth and an ability to voice their own concerns regarding teaching and learning. Many students stated that they felt comfortable phoning instructors when necessary and received satisfaction from engaging, stimulating, and exciting discussions during most of their classes.

"The instructor is very good at keeping focused and very good at stimulating and encouraging debates. It helps us because every teacher is a teacher of language."

"We were given a lot of personal attention. We can call our profs and talk to them."

"I was a lot more engaged; it wasn't just somebody standing up there lecturing at us. It was somebody actually interacting with us. The professors had experience too, but they all stood up and talked and talked."

"We're very opinionated and very good at voicing our opinions. The environment lends to it down there at Elm Street School."

"We're a vocal group. If we disagreed with something the instructors said, we let them know."

"The profs were approachable; they were willing to go that extra mile to make this thing work."

"We could get in heated debates; we would be yelling at each other. I think we had a lot more input into the direction we were going into and how our exams were going to be scheduled and what forms they were

going to take, and what form the assignments were going to take."

"There's a message sending capability on the network and we were sending him messages all the time - having fun like that."

"Just listening to lectures and picking up on their personal experiences has really helped."

Communication and Collaboration Between the Faculty of Education

One student felt that the Faculty of Education made a real effort to be communicative with the student teachers. The Faculty of Education made an attempt to keep the lines of communication open.

"The Faculty of Education would call and say, "Is there anything you need or..." They really kept the lines of communication open."

Other students greatly appreciated their faculty advisors. It was conveyed by many P.S.1 students that the faculty advisors were very approachable and concerned with the students' well-being and have guided their journey in learning to become effective teachers.

"I can't imagine a better person to supervise the project."

"The advisor's been fantastic. The politics and all that aside - he's been very approachable."

"He made a point of meeting with the colleagues here in P.S.1 as a staff."

Feedback Between Students & Stakeholders

It is necessary to analyze the language of students in order to truly understand their personal experience and delve into the contexts and meanings they bring to the learning process. The term feedback was expressed very frequently. Interestingly enough, the students used this word in many different contexts.

Feedback From Peers

The P.S.1 students felt secure in their environment and comfortable with one another. As a result, they could openly and honestly express their personal view points. Positive opinions were genuinely appreciated and any negative comments were viewed as constructive criticism and frequently utilized as a learning tool to improve their teaching abilities and P.S.1 experiences. In addition, many students felt they could grow professionally once they received feedback focusing on specific areas that needed to be refined and improved.

"You can improve here, you can improve there."

Feedback from Teacher Associates

Most students valued the feedback provided by teacher associates. It was suggested that at times there needed to be more constructive criticism.

"Well we really don't want to hurt your feelings or discourage you from teaching..."

Feedback from Instructors Regarding Assignments

A concern was voiced by some students with reference to the length of time it took to receive feedback regarding assignments. They felt it necessary to receive feedback soon after an assignment in order to monitor their own performance.

"I like to know where I stand and if I needed to work harder. I need some feedback."

Feedback from Faculty Advisors

The students were highly responsive to faculty advisors, yet concerned with the prolonged expanse of time in providing feedback subsequent to being evaluated. In

addition, the perceptions possessed by many students indicate that the feedback was extremely positive. P.S.I students implied that it should be a fundamental and necessary function for faculty advisors to indicate areas that need to be developed and improved.

"I'd like to know what I can improve on. What do I need to improve on?
What was okay? I'd like to know what I'm doing right but..."

The Literature in Review

Researchers in the field of teacher education emphasize the need for collaboration and communication. It is extremely important for student teachers to experience the collaborative nature of teaching to prevent the isolation and individualized structure of our school culture. As well, student teachers must be allowed to work together as teams with the aim for student teachers to become more reflective and thoughtful decision makers. In this way they are more apt to take control of their own professional development.

The research suggest that close attention must be given to individuals involved in peer placements. As well, educators must be aware of the need for school university partnerships and relationships between student teachers and teacher educators. The quotes drawn from the literature are listed below.

Peter McDermott, J. Rothenberg & J. Hammer (1995)
The Influence on Student Teachers' Thoughts about Teaching

"Inquiries into student teachers' thinking may provide insights into the effects of teacher education programs and suggest program improvement to prepare new teachers better" (p.184).

John Goodlad (1991) emphasized the need for school - university partnerships.

"Any teacher education program created or conducted without the collaboration of surrounding schools is defective. And I mean collaboration where the schools are equal partners. School people need to bring pressure

on the universities. They need to insist, "We want to be a part of this; we're going to be in on it. In many partnerships it is just assumed that the school will play a very significant role and that school people will be teacher educators" (p.13).

To overcome the isolation and individualism that is so prevalent in our present school culture, Zhixin Su (1990) contends that, "We need to rebuild those broken bridges of communication between the teachers training institutions and the schools. Moreover, we need to make organizational arrangements to allow student teachers to interact extensively with their peers, with their supervisors from both the college and the schools, and with other teachers and administrators at the cooperating schools" (p.7).

(Zeichner, K. & Liston, D. (1987). Teaching student teachers to reflect. Harvard Educational Review, 57 (1), 23-48.

"The milieu of the program should be inquiry oriented rather than "traditional" in relation to the authority relationships which exist between student teachers and teacher educators. According to McIntosh (1968), a traditional environment for clinical education is one that places a high value on "precision in following orders" and does not provide students with opportunities for independent decision making with regard to their own education and that of pupils. Alternately, an inquiry environment elicits and rewards initiative and critical thought at all levels of the organization and provides students with opportunities for independent decision making with regard to their education and teaching. Thus, in an inquiry environment, authority relations are more collaborative than in a traditional environment, and attempts are made to break down some of the rigid hierarchical lines which typify traditional programs" (p.28).

Beverly Showers (1985)
Teachers Coaching Teachers

"Schools restructured to support the development of peer coaching teams create norms of collegiality and experimentation" (p.24).

Hawkey, K. (1995). Learning from peers: The experience of student teachers in school-based teacher education. Journal of Teacher Education, 46(3), 175-183.

"Robertson (1992) suggests that several gender related variables can interfere with pair effectiveness (p.57). Women, for example, expect to be evaluated more harshly and negatively than their male counterparts (Heilman & Kram, 1983). The ethic of care suggests that women are reluctant to give feedback they believe hurtful (Gilligan, 1982). Some suggest individuals are more likely to trust same-sex colleagues than those of the opposite sex (Scott, 1983). Male pairs treated the activity of post lesson evaluations as just another task that they agreed to do, whereas, the female pairs used the activity to pursue their own development. The female pairs discussion were highly interactive, probing, egalitarian, and supportive" (p.181).

Theme III

Structure and Organization

The Students' Metaphorical Language

- ▶ lack of responsibility
- ▶ disorganization
- ▶ we're an island over here
- ▶ breaking new ground
- ▶ sacrificial lamb
- ▶ really concentrated
- ▶ almost over the mountain

Theme III

Structure/Organization of the Student Teaching Practicum and Program in General

The P.S.I. students enjoyed the structure of the program - the cohesive nature of participating in curriculum and instruction courses, how-to modules and student teaching. They took great pleasure in establishing rapport with their pupils on the first day of school. Attending this first day orientation allowed the P.S.1 students the opportunity to experience the beginning of the school year and it served as a vehicle to ease their anxiety level. As well, as stated previously, they were able to observe the growth and learning of their pupils. Even though they observed the value of offering this type of program, there were still some concerns.

1. A.M. was preferred over P.M. - students felt there wasn't enough time in the afternoon.
2. Lack of continuity - students would begin a unit and then wouldn't be able to return to it after considerable time.
3. Lack of schedule and inconsistency - due to the nature and structure of the program, teacher associates, pupils and student teachers found it problematic and disruptive when the P.S.1 students were required to suspend teaching responsibilities and attend classes at Elm Street School. Many children and teacher associates felt unsettled since they were not always aware when student teachers would be attending class at Elm Street School or resuming their role as student teacher.
4. Teacher associates did not follow the 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 schedule - this lack of structure added to feelings of a non-committal caring attitude on the part of the University, which in turn lead to feelings of isolation.

"Take a few quirks out and it probably will be a really good program."

"I think at the very beginning, I think all of us were concerned about getting that one third, one third, one third, but then I think after we realized that we were completely on our own here and we ?????? get a sub, about what the requirements were, just do it."

"It is a pilot program. It went better than I thought. I was expecting a lot more problems."

"Another thing that I really like especially with the program is we had a chance to get to meet our class right away. We had that day and a half. I had the whole classes' names. When I came back I could remember at least three quarters of them. So I had that advantage of at least being able to call out a name or whatever and then I just had to remember about five or six names, and from there it was a piece of cake. And they knew who you were too."

"We felt like this island over here and we had to make do."

The students felt the program was organized too hastily - August 28, 1995. Some felt that rushed implementation of this P.S.1 cohort program conveyed an impression of irresponsibility on the University's part. As well, the students felt the organizational structure with regards to planning assignments could have been modified. The time could have been utilized better during the first few weeks of the program.

"If I had to change something, I think I would change the way in which the assignments and the tests and the planning of teaching really all went together. I think we should put more emphasis in the first half of the semester on the assignments and the tests and the things that need to be done for our classes, and then towards the end I'd like to see more just coming to class to talk about our classroom experience. Because we're so caught up at the end in getting all these papers and log books and journals and videos done, and this and that, that we don't get a chance to talk about some of the important things that are happening. So if we concentrated the first half of the semester on student teaching but also on getting all the assignments done by maybe the middle of November, even the beginning of November. Then towards the end we have that class time to talk about what's happening. Because we just talked about what was happening with this assignment; what are you to do with this? What are you to do with this?...What does this do, what does this do? We didn't get to talk about the great things that were happening to us because we were so busy talking about all the things that we had to do."

"It was designed, planned, everything was done August 28, and we started the 5th of September.

"I think that we were told that we were into cohort on July 5, so they told us

that we were involved in this Medicine Hat Project."

Structure and Organization Regarding Instructors

Due to the perceived lack of organization, it was felt that the instructors did not know what was to be expected and, as a result, they could not communicate expectations to their P.S. 1 students. The students felt there was a lack of communication between instructors. According to several students, if the instructors had utilized a collaborative model, they could have worked together, coordinated many of the assignments and discussed the "specifics" of each. As well, many course outlines were not presented near the beginning of the program. This added to the frustration of the P.S. 1 students.

"A lot of the courses, I found that a lot of them overlapped in some ways and that the instructors weren't communicating. That would have been really nice if they could have something...because I thought I was floundering for the first couple of weeks; didn't know what was going on. I like a lot of structure, because that structure wasn't there I was panicking. It was like I'm going back to ninth grade. Something that I really found stressful, like Jim said, was when a couple of instructors did not give us their outline until a month into the project and with the assignments and everything we had a lull for the first two weeks where we could have been concentrating on some assignments."

"Even sitting there the first day of classes back here in Medicine Hat, "We don't know this yet because we don't have that planned. We don't know that yet because we don't have it planned." That was kind of a problem. That was disappointing, that was really disappointing. That almost turned me completely off of education. It was just the lack of responsibility and organization."

"It would have been completely avoided had they come up and said, This is the deal guys, we're at a complete loss, but we're working on it, we're totally working on it."

Structure/Organization & Communication

Several students felt somewhat isolated and ostracized due to lack of organization

and communication. They felt they were "left hanging on" - not knowing expectations. A few students suggested the need for feedback from the University - perhaps a newsletter from the P.S. 1 students in Lethbridge. They wondered if the U. of L. P.S.1 students would have enjoyed listening to their stories. Many students felt that if the University attended to these structural and communicative concerns, the cohort program would be excellent.

"What I would like to have seen happen is the University professors get together and coordinate their programs. A lot of it is repeated from one class to the next. If I have on more soccer ball passed to me and tell how my day was going - and that type of situation happened probably four or five times over three or four different classes. So it got a little redundant. I think what it was, was that one professor wasn't sure what the other one was doing - no communication there. They might've decided who was teaching what area but the specifics needed to be worked out a bit better."

"The other P.S.1 students, it's like they don't even know anything about this project. They don't know anything about what we're doing. It's not even talked about."

Structure/Organization and its Impact on P.S. 1 Students' Personal Life

Many students were appreciative that the University tried to be flexible in meeting the needs of students living in or near Medicine Hat, yet there were some "little hassles" that contributed to their frustration.

- the long drive to meet with counsellors
- the phone calls regarding health plan
- problems getting a list of names from the Registrar's Office in order to seek out a roommate
- loss of \$500.00 for breaking a rental lease

"It starts at the very beginning for me. Getting a list of names of the participants in this group was like pulling hen's teeth. They were very reluctant to give names. When I did get the names, I was given twelve female names according to the Registrar's Office or the person I talked to said there

were no males involved in this program. What I was doing was looking for roommates, so as a result I think the exception of Lisa and I, who's my roommate, the rest of ?????? singles is it not the case? It could have been a lot less expensive had they been a little more open about, a little bit more organized when they gave us saying, "You are now involved in Medicine Hat Cohort, here's the list of all the people that are involved. Call them up maybe some interests, maybe some ages, maybe some majors, whatever." Because as it is, we've got one guy that's paying \$400.00 a month for a bachelor suite. I signed to a six month lease cause that's the only thing I could find. I'm breaking that lease and I'm losing \$500.00. There were no indications from the U. of L. to say, this is where you can start looking, here is a listing, it was getting yourself, do it yourself, no help. When we got down here that lack of support was absolutely prevalent. There was no support. We were promised a computer, a fax machine and an e-mail. We were promised curriculum materials as well, as it turned out, if we wanted any curriculum materials we were going up there by ourselves. We did get an extended two weeks, as opposed to everyone else who have a one week lending period. We had a two week lending period."

Structure/Organization in Relation to the University of Lethbridge

A major issue of contention was that the P.S.1 students were informed there would be resources such as e-mail, fax and computers available to them. These promises, in most cases, were acted upon. Some students also discussed the need for better use of a computer facility, library resources - easier access to information and books. Others did not see this as being a problem. They were able to use the public library and computers at the Medicine Hat College, at Alexandra Junior High School and at Crestwood Elementary.

It was felt that the registration for courses was a problem. Some students had difficulties getting through using U-Link; as well phone calls were not returned by the people at U. of L. and the distance and mileage added to this frustration.

Most students were extremely pleased with their University faculty advisor since he

was encouraging, motivating, an excellent role model, supplied purposeful and meaningful feedback, listened to students' concerns, provided a liaison between the U. of L. and P.S.1 students, as well as instructed a P.S. 1 module. Many students felt that because of the diverse roles and various expectations of the faculty advisor, an additional advisor could assume responsibilities to assist in evaluation and communication procedures.

"During the week like Monday to Friday I'd be up at 4 in the morning, drive to Medicine Hat, to be at school for 8, and we were in the schools in the morning, and then put in a half day, drive to Medicine Hat, eat lunch along the way, be at school for 1:00, and usually 3:30, 4:00 we'd wrap up classes and then go home, prepare lesson plans for the lessons that you had to do the next day, or usually two days in advance was all we could plan for me. So doing up those lessons plans, trying to get your resources that you need for those lessons plans, going to the public library, buying books and that sort of thing just because the resources here are so non-existent. So you'd be finished around 8 or 9 at night. And then Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday it'd be a little bit better because you didn't have to get up so early but you were working till 8 or 9 at night. My main thing about it is that the first month we did basically nothing and everyone was going, this is a piece of cake. This is gonna be great, and then it hit! And for the last two and a half - three months it's been steady and it doesn't let up. So the scheduling I think was a big problem."

"Oh, he has had time to touch base with each one of us, even in class just to say, how's it going? Solved a lot of problemst for us. I can't imagine a better person, actually, supervise the project. All the things he tried to do. Well, I just watched him doing his little office work yesterday because of my prep time, he was in the office on the cellular phone he was given. He couldn't find a single person he was trying to phone cause they were all out of town. He's been left with, I think, a lot of, like not a lot of people are working with him, so he can really get this project going. He's doing the best job he's capable of. It might of helped to split his job up."

The Literature in Review

The research in teacher education suggest that it is important to structure and organize teacher education programs to facilitate the learning process. Furthermore, the effectiveness

of methods and procedures in these programs must be accurately and appropriately evaluated and revised. University leaders and faculty must continue to acknowledge and seek to improve the structure and organization of teacher education programs.

John I. Goodlad (1991) emphasized the following;

"Teachers for Our Nation's Schools recommends that there be enough "partner" schools to accommodate all future teachers admitted to each such program and that groups of new teachers be brought into those schools as junior faculty members during post-baccalaureate year devoted to internships and accompanying seminars. This may prove to be the most demanding of our expectations" (p.316).

Theme IV

Linking Theory and Practice

The Students' Metaphorical Language

- ▶ building bridges
- ▶ togetherness is important
- ▶ opportunity
- ▶ making connections
- ▶ meaningful teaching
- ▶ nice balance

Theme IV

Theory and Practice

The concept of the links between theory and practice surfaced throughout the data. The students were able to directly tie educational concepts to concrete, hands-on experiences in the classroom. Many of the students understood the metacognitive nature and practical consequences of bridging theory and practice. They felt as if they had input into the learning situation and were able to navigate and direct their learning experiences. By articulating their experiences in part by using an inquiry approach and analysis during classroom discussions, students understood the significance of linking theory and practice.

"The fact of doing half days is a good idea. A lot of people probably say the same thing. When we're taking a class we can apply it in the afternoon or morning, and then come back to class and discuss it. It's very good that way and it worked for a lot of classes."

"It's really been beneficial to have classroom teachers teach our classes because they come in and say, "Oh you know just this morning this happened to me and this is how I dealt with it." And even sometimes they asked us, "What do you think? Should I have dealt with it this way or what would you have done?" And that really makes you think, well what would I do? or How would I apply what she's teaching me to what I actually did in the classroom? The prof might say, "Well, this is what I do." It's really a nice balance between teaching and the classrooms. Knowing how things actually work. All too often at the University I got information that was like, I mean this is not a bad thing - I know it's not always possible to have this kind...at the University that are actually teaching in the classroom, but it's just I get all this information and I go, O.K., so what does this mean?"

If (an instructor) said look for this, look how this person behaves. You're talking about your class in the morning and going back to the school in the afternoon."

Some students discussed how they could march into their respective teaching

classrooms with a bag of tricks and try them out. These particular students could discuss which trick to use, when to apply the trick and under which condition; as well, they could often understand when a trick didn't work, and why.

"When we're taking a class we can apply in the afternoon or the morning or whatever, try it out, and come back to class and discuss it. It's very good that way and it worked for a lot of classes."

"She (my student teacher peer) was kind of reminding me - like things that we would do at school in our classes. There was definitely things I would carry over, but there were things I was forgetting and she was using them so it helped me...She was kind of reminding me that, Yeah, we did do that in language and I should remember that."

The link between theory based university courses and practical experiences also assisted the students in relating to their assignments and finding meaning in their course work.

"When you have an assignment and you talk about it in the morning and it's something to do with your school...really beneficial."

"I'm the kind of person, I'll read my text and I'll forget it. But, they say if you apply (what you learn), you know it's something that you'll always know."

"I think that the experience in the school, has been a real motivator. Also, my language in education course motivated me to teach because the idea came through that students learn through language. So in teaching language they're learning and in getting them to use language they're learning. That course was really motivating."

It may be interesting to note that some students felt the theory, practice and personal experiences generated questions and encouraged experimenting and risk taking, which in turn fostered self-analysis, introspection, and reflection.

"It's a great hands-on experience, so it's quite motivating for me to be innovative and to always be looking. I was always before this - my way or

the highway type of girl."

Finally, with regards to theory and practice one student felt that the "learning by doing," "trial and error," "experience" concept of learning was in essence "the real teacher." This student, however, also indicated he learned good things in the first couple of weeks of classes, information he applied.

"I've been afforded those opportunities to try which in my opinion is just great. Having the freedom to succeed, I mean the freedom to fail, is the best way to learn and through failing one learns a lot."

Some students analyzed the process and could appreciate the advantages of structuring the program with classes in the morning and practicum in the afternoons and vice versa, yet they felt the program was more challenging than it would have been if they had participated in the traditional U. of L. P.S.1 practicum.

The general consensus was that while the students could comprehend the benefits of directly tying educational theory to personal teaching experiences, many of them felt apprehensive with regards to applying psychological theory. They could not understand the relevance of many theoretical principles and felt the evaluation process contributed to their frustration.

"So far this semester, there's not much I would change. I think the idea of having us go to school half days and teach half days is a good idea. For me it worked really well. The only thing I would have changed is part of my Ed. Psych. course. It was evaluated highly with exams and I would have appreciated more opportunities to have maybe some assignments that related to what I was doing in school - maybe some kind of little project where I was applying a concept to students."

The Literature in Review

Researchers in the field of teacher education realize the importance of constructing a bridge between theory and practice. The integration of theory with classroom practice offers the opportunity to improve new teachers' understanding of classroom pedagogy and children.

The following quotes summarize and confirm the responses of the P.S.1 students.

D. Kagan (1992)

Professional Growth Among Preservice and Beginning Teachers

"One plausible reason students do not readily transfer concepts learned in a foundations course into practice is that they can learn theories and concepts without altering beliefs."

Jesse Goodman (1988)

University Culture and the Problem of Reforming Field Experiences In Teacher Education

Dan Lortie (1975)

Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study

"Many studies indicate the reaffirmed notion that teacher education programs seem to have little influence on the students' preconceived belief systems" (p.45).

P. Grossman & A. Richert (1988)

Unacknowledged knowledge growth: A Re-examination of the Effects of Teacher Education

"Grossman and Richert (1988) suggest that it may be premature to introduce student teachers to issues related to pupils' diverse abilities for understanding before the students gain school experience. They add that once students have experience in the field their capacity for understanding student diversity is abilities and their need for understanding how to manage it grows rapidly" (p.61).

Alberto Rodriguez (1993)

A Dose of Reality: Understanding the origin of the Theory/Practice Dichotomy in teacher education from the students' point of view

"It may be more productive to work with the strong conceptions of learning and teaching students bring with them into the program, acknowledge their value, and move to provide concrete opportunities for students to experience alternate strategies and theories" (p.220).

Calderhead, J. (Ed.). (1988). Teachers' professional learning. Philadelphia: The Falmer Press, Taylor & Francis Inc.

Baird Mitchell (1986) states that, "Experience, including one's present teaching practices, shapes the meaning that we read into research, theory and other sources of recommendations for changes in practice" (p.32).

Russell (1987) states that, "The relationship between theory and practice can be one in which the two are alternate phases of a single activity, not two independent domains linked by a tenuous act of faith" (p.33).

James Calderhead argues that, "Learning to teach is not a two-step process of learning theory; and putting theory into practice" (p.32).

"Experience is significant in the learning the "theory" of teaching" (p.32).

Bruce Joyce & M. Weil (1972)
Perspectives for Reform in Teacher Education

Bruce Joyce reported that educators must design programs that blend theory, research, method courses and practice together.

"One sometimes hears the comment that a broad range of teaching strategies is beyond the reach of teacher candidates, although these strategies are accessible to experienced teachers. However, the evidence would warrant the conclusion that preservice candidates can learn a wide repertoire of models of teaching provided that the full complement of training components is included; that is, the theory-demonstration-practice coaching (or study group) complex appears to be necessary for mastery. To attempt to teach a variety of teaching strategies with the use of print materials and lectures only is bound to be disappointing" (p.35).

John I. Goodlad (1990, 1991) stated the following:

"Linking theory and practice improves teachers understanding of themselves, their roles as educators, classroom pedagogy and children" (p.4).

As well he states that;

"A third major restructuring has to do with the relationship between theory and practice. Now, in teacher education programs, very much as in the schools themselves, lecture is the dominating instructional practice. Perhaps some field experience accompanies it, but rarely are the two joined. That should be reversed in two ways: first, through case studies and second, through field observations that become the subject matter of discourse. In other words, we should put the analysis of practice first and bring the theory and principles to it, rather than teach theory and hope the students will see the relationship" (p.11).

John Dewey (1916)
Democracy and Education

With regard to information and content in education, John Dewey asks, "Does it fit into his more direct acquaintance so as to increase its efficacy and deepen meaning? Does it grow naturally out of some question with which the student is concerned? If it meets these requirements, it is educative. The amount heard or read is of no importance - the more the better, provided the student has a need for it and can apply it in some situation of his own" (p.186).

Theme V

Pedagogy - Ways of Knowing

The Students' Metaphorical Language

- ▶ shifting sands
- ▶ I think learning through experience is the best kind of learning
- ▶ experimenting/research
- ▶ responsibility
- ▶ we've been put in a teacher's life
- ▶ through the cracks

Theme V

Pedagogy - Ways of Knowing**Workload**

Many of these Professional Semester 1 students felt the University of Lethbridge set unrealistic expectations and did not take into account the number of hours this type of program demands. It has been noted that the students spent a great deal of time preparing lesson plans, marking pupil assignments, attending courses, studying and completing assignments. As a result there was considerably less time to focus on planning their own curriculum units as well as preparing and developing effective lessons. The students felt that a positive outcome of the long hours was that they cultivated immense organizational and time management skills. They felt a great deal was expected of them because it was a new program which necessitated their taking full responsibility to become engaged in their work for the entire semester.

"I would recommend this program to other P.S.1 students with a clause - it's a lot of work. I know that P.S.1 in Lethbridge is a lot of work, but this is a lot of work being in the classroom and being in school at the same time. You have to have immense organizational skills to do this. And that's one thing of mine that's really improved this semester is organization. Get your life together here. We have papers due in a week and we've got to have lessons planned. If you want to be in this program you have to be prepared to take it on fully. You can't take it on half way - you've got to take it on full steam. I think everyone was so enthusiastic because it was new. Let's go, let's go! So hopefully that continues.

"There's more work here. As far as assignments and stuff. It could be false but that's what I saw other stuff and that they had a lot more free time and stuff. And I think that kind of affected some of my teaching here too. Because sometimes I would have as much time to prepare for lessons and

stuff.

"One thing I've noticed taking this course, I've been ten times more organized than I've ever been before in my life. And I'm better able to think on my feet whereas, before I came in, I never had those kinds of skills."

"As far as getting the university workload done, many didn't take into account the fact that our day was used up. So we were basically doing university workload at night. And things like for instance Ed. Psych. - to read an entire textbook or be expected to read the entire textbook plus do papers plus do lesson plans - all of that at the same time in the evenings is just very unrealistic."

A small group of students did not feel the pressure and demands of the program and mentioned they came to terms with this simply by reorganizing their own timelines.

"But there's also a down side to those half day things because we're doing our assignments and we're trying to study and do our homework, meanwhile doing lesson plans, and we're marking and this and that, so it adds to the workload and a lot of people were complaining that the workload for this is unbelievable. You'll find when you talk to my other colleague in science and there's one other science girl, that this is a huge let up for us. Like this is nothing. As long as you time manage and stuff it's very easy. Not that we've been time managing very well, we've been kinda laxing. But other than that it's very manageable compared to what we normally do. It's a great experience."

"The other P.S.1 students cram everything, all their classes into a short period and then it's like a breath of fresh air when they don't have to do other things but lessons. We have ours spread out and we're able to handle...we're constantly doing more, but we're able to handle it better."

"We spent more time in the classroom than they did, and that's going to be an advantage - just wait 'til P.S.2."

Analysis of Course Content

Most of the students felt the concepts covered in each class were applicable to the practicum. They also felt the assignments were useful and relevant and contributed to their development as a teacher. The data obtained from the interview process concurs with

the results of the data collected from the quantitative analysis.

With regards to the assignments, some students were concerned with the relevancy, redundancy and applicability of specific assignments.

"But I feel for course content they're getting a lot of things covered. And there has been a lot of good things I've learned. But they're just here and there and they're not consistent for me. So they're covering the course content, I do believe so, and the people they've got who are not U. of L. faculty are doing a pretty good job - they're getting everything covered and I'm trying to keep my bias out of courses itself, but they're getting the material covered, they're getting it across. Maybe not in the best methods, in my opinion, but they're getting the course content covered."

"It was never over our heads, the instructor never used words that we couldn't understand, it's just it was very confusing and I guess a lot of people in our class found it hard to find a purpose in the assignment. And that's what made it really hard. Like, what is the purpose of this? Like, if there's an end to the means it's a lot easier. But everybody was very, very, very confused."

The greatest concern voiced by some students was the feeling that they hoped they were covering the same content as the students in the University P.S.1 program.

"The greatest thing that I was worried about was that I was missing out on something that was being offered in Lethbridge. And then to go back into that situation and start P.S.2 and someone starts talking about something that we might not have covered. And there was a couple of courses that I was concerned about. I've discussed that with several profs and is this exactly what's going on in Lethbridge or are they - I know the course outlines are the same but in at least two of the courses at the beginning they didn't follow the course outline."

"If I feel disadvantaged that would be it. Just that I would be concerned that my course material that we would require for P.S.2 hasn't been covered."

Analysis of Instruction

There was a great deal of analyzing of teaching methods since the P.S.1 students were simultaneously teachers and students. Even though the students enjoyed their

instructors, they felt it was important for professors to model effective teaching strategies and become cognitive of the phrase, "practice what you preach."

"The most positive aspects of P.S.1 here for me, has been a real enthusiasm. The professors that we have in Medicine Hat, they all really wanted us to succeed and they all really wanted us to do really well so this could continue for them and for us. That really showed through. They did everything they could to make this a good experience. I give A+'s to all the professors. I enjoyed their classes, I enjoyed their enthusiasm, never felt like "I don't want to go to school today", it was like "yeah, let's go to school."

"But there's so many benefits to it. We're learning a great amount. We're getting actual teachers."

"They're sitting here telling us how to teach and it's very contradictory. We are instructed to vary the pitch in our voices and doing this and that. You know what the instructor does? The professor sits up at the front of the class and reads lecture notes. That's it."

"As far as evaluation is concerned I think some of the things we learned on our evaluation sheet should be applied in our other Ed classes. Our evaluation teacher was really, really strict on being a teacher model. For example, when she did our tests the instructor said "Here's some examples of good work. This is exactly what you need to do. Here is a rubric, this is how you do it. This is what I'm looking for." I think that we were learning skills like that whether they be evaluation skills or teaching skills they should be modelled to us in other classes.

"I think, probably from this experience, I'm hoping, I know, I think I will just from the experience of being at the same time, simultaneously, a teacher and a student. I realize now it's so important to give feedback to the kids. That's the nice thing about this, that we're teachers and students at the same time so we can take from one what we don't like."

Reflection/Growth and Constructing Meaning

Many students felt fortunate and motivated being in the schools at the beginning of the practicum. They enjoyed getting to know their students, teacher associates, and other staff members. For many this was the highlight of the Professional Semester 1

experience. It has provided the P.S.1 students the opportunity to understand what it takes to be a teacher.

"I think the way that this practicum has motivated me, or the student teaching has motivated me, is to always be learning. The way some universities are set up where you have one six-week practicum term and that's the only teaching experience that you have and all of a sudden you are looking for a job. I realize that if it were possible it might be great to have the last two years of your degree doing something like this. I think the practicum really set in your mind exactly what is expected as a teacher at any level, junior high, senior high, elementary."

"We've been in that class, we know those students just as well as the teacher does. It's given me the opportunity to basically, for an entire semester, with those children a better understanding of what it takes to be a teacher. I have friends who have done P.S.1 and 2 last year and being thrown in to that setup, it never helped them at all. Because here it's a new teacher the kids have to get used to this. All of a sudden the courses are thrown at him so prepare it."

Reflection (Growth and Constructing Meaning)

"Thinking Like a Teacher"

Many comments the students made were very reflective in nature and described their feelings about learning to become a teacher. Many comments were made regarding student teachers "thinking like a teacher." The following statements summarize this point:

- 1) Understanding the unique needs of individuals
- 2) Observing and understanding pupil progress and growth
- 3) Understanding the psychology of teaching (child development)
- 4) Being aware of teachable moments
- 5) Observing the joy of learning
- 6) Assessing student progress
- 7) Feeling a sense of accomplishment
- 8) Collaborating with staff
- 9) Freedom to try and experiment in class without ridicule
- 10) Analyzing the roles and responsibilities ie. principal
- 11) Making connections (If you can do this...then...)
- 12) Understanding the nature and demands of being a teacher and juggling family life, etc.

- 13) Using various learning strategies to assist students in learning.
- 14) Breaking down the barriers between teachers and students.

"Actually, I've come in and I've changed my attitude so much about teaching because I've been here for so long. Like I think that method really works well. I think they should change it at the U. of L. as well."

"I loved having such a long practicum. I really enjoyed getting to know those kids and my T.A. and the people in the staff room and everything. I don't know if I could have felt this comfortable in the six weeks or whatever they do in Lethbridge. I was really happy with this practicum because it is the highlight of what I'm doing right now."

"I don't know. Just recently I've been teaching full mornings and I enjoyed that. A kid comes up to me and asks me something and can I help them out and they smile, or then they finally realize it or something. I taught a math lesson the other day and it was my first one, and I was up all night worrying about. I dreamt of it. I sat up in bed and was teaching it. It was bad. Anyway it went really well, and they really understood what I taught and that was encouraging. I thought, "Wow, if I can teach this math, I think I can do whatever." I was really nervous about it, but it went well."

"The kids seemed to understand what I taught and that was the main thing, because I was waiting for these "don't get it", the blank stares."

"I think we've been kind of put in ??? a teacher's life too. They have many others things to do, and many demands and families and everything so I think that, that's an advantage."

"Being able to learn about teaching all the way from September to December. I've been able to be in full time in November and December. I couldn't have learned all that in 2 months. Like I really don't think I could have. It's learning and thinking about it every night for 4 months that like that. Having our professors who are teachers here in the school district has helped."

"Ya, those couple of kids that when I tried to motivate discussion or something they would never discuss anything or if they did they would put up their hand and say "Oh, I forgot", and now they actually include things into our discussion and I just love it. I love it when I ask them for an answer and they give me something really intelligent, it's so nice now to see their progress."

"It makes me realize, yes, I've gotten across to that student. I've broken

through that barrier that we had between us. That's been really encouraging. It makes me feel that I've really accomplished something."

"You got to see what the kids were like first thing in the morning and then two weeks later you got to see what they are like in the afternoon, because they are really very different."

"There's been quite a few. Most of them happened in the school with the students when the students have really liked an assignment or the students have seemed really excited or I've been able to return a paper or exam where maybe a student who hasn't been doing so well has improved a great deal. All these kinds of things."

"I think for me it's more, for me it's more of feeling that when you're teaching a lesson and know you're on a roll and you're going with and you're getting to more advanced things, like maybe children this age would not be normally taught, but because they're so keen and they want to know more and they're asking difficult questions that they still get. And you're just like "Yes, that's a good moment."

"I do that just to help build that child's confidence, like "Yes, I can answer that question." That really been encouraging for me. Now these kids who weren't involved want to be involved, these are the ones with their hands in the air."

"This is an excellent school. I don't think I could have asked for a better school. I think that the staff has been excellent with us, very patient and Jane is about the best principal I've seen. And how she functions. And the staff room is so friendly. There's no intimidation in this school."

"With me, I found that a lot of times it was like, especially in one instance with me, when I finally got the main idea in detail of articles. Like they were able to tell the difference and I had taken several different approaches to actually getting that information and they finally got it."

The students often critically analyzed, reflected upon and evaluated their own practice and growth in becoming teachers. Often they would seek to make sense of their pedagogy. In doing so, they engaged in many discussions that assisted in a transformation and restructuring of their own beliefs about teaching. In the analysis of the data, the term

"growth" was used in categorizing the P.S.1 students' responses.

Growth

- seeing progress
- noticing changes and make change
- self-inquiry
- learning from mistakes
- understanding that experiencing is learning
- experimenting - support to try anything
- taking time to relax - to enjoy the learning experience
- growing together, sharing ideas, strategies, etc.
- constructing meaning "We're not going to do this assignment again."
- taking on responsibility
- finding a purpose
- understanding the context of one's life
- sorting priorities, professional ethics, etc.

"We both know that everyone wants to be the best teacher that they can."

"I took responsibility for it."

"Posters were part of our first assignment. We just said "We're not doing this again."

"I think we'll realize how much we really did learn. I think learning through experience is the best kind of learning, so I'm all up for that. It's just things just hit all at once."

It took my T.A. to point this out, because I was just like, "Oh, why didn't I do that."

"I think that the experience in the school, like actually student teaching, has really been a motivator and has helped a lot. And also my language in education course really was motivating to teach because the idea came through that students learn through language, so in teaching language they're learning and in getting them to use language they're learning. That course was really motivating."

"Very motivating. Get out there. Get at it. Make change. That sort of thing. That was a very good class."

"P.S.1 is also a very, I found, I've never been one for self-assessment or

evaluation. I've always been, like ya whatever, like I got 40 or 50 that's okay, that's good enough. I haven't figured out what I've done wrong or whatever, and I've found that this P.S.1 has just been nerve-wracking and I've come home just emotionally exhausted because someone has said to me, whatever instructor has said, "Why did you do what you just did? Or my T.A. saying "Okay, now explain to me how you came up with that?" or "How do you feel about that? or "How did it work in you head?" For the first time, probably in my life, where someone has come back to me and said "I'm not going to accept you just saying "I don't know" I want you to figure out a little bit more. You know, being 25 years old and not knowing what you're about is kind of scary, and people in this world that are older and they don't know why they do what they do, what learning or ????? classes is."

"Our instructor read a book to us called *Through the Cracks*, and I thought that was an excellent book and I asked for it on my Christmas wish list. I think it's great. I'm a Dr. Seuss fan and I get a kick out of those targey comments or whatever, so I still have that love for children's books, but that *Through the Cracks* was just a beautiful book. It had a message for students, and a message for teachers, that the cracks are somewhere you don't want to be and if you are there, it is the responsibility of both the teacher and the student. You know, like it's not because the teacher is ignoring you, it is because to need to be ignored, or whatever. So it's shouldering the responsibility on both the child and the teacher, and then giving an idea of how to get out of that; how to get out of those cracks and get back on to the surface with all the other kids. It's just an excellent book."

The Literature in Review

There is an increased emphasis in teacher education to encourage student teachers to move beyond the simple aspects of teaching. Rather than simply focusing on how to teach, efforts are geared toward having student teachers ask why and what to teach. The goal is to help student teachers become more experimental and reflective about their work and the nature of education. The following quotes may be of interest for teacher educators involved in altering the purposes of field experiences and foundation courses.

McDermott, P., Rothenberg, J., & Gormley, K. (1991). You gotta believe: teachers' perceptions about their teaching preparation. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the New England Educational Research Organization, Ellenville, NY.

"Teachers are influenced by beliefs. What teachers believe about teaching and learning strongly influences what they do in their classrooms (Clark & Peterson, 1986)" (p.3.).

Lee S. Shulman (1986) envisions the use of case studies in teacher education, as a means for developing strategic understanding, professional judgement and decision making.

Lee Shulman (1986)

Those who understand: Knowledge Growth In Teaching

"When strategic understanding is brought to bear in the examination of rules and cases, professional judgement, the hallmark of any learned profession, is called into play. What distinguishes mere craft from profession is the indeterminacy of rules when applied to particular cases. The professional holds knowledge, not only of how the capacity for skilled performance - but of what and why. The teacher is not only a master of procedure but also of content and rationale, and capable of reflection leading to self-knowledge, the metacognitive awareness that distinguishes draftsman from architect, bookkeeper from auditor. A professional is capable not only of practicing and understanding his or her craft, but of communicating the reasons for professional decisions and actions to others" (p.13).

"Those who can, do. Those who understand, teach" (p.14).

Bruce Joyce (1972)

Perspective for Reform in Teacher Education

The implications for a teacher education program are clear. Bruce Joyce (1972) suggests that, "Teaching education must be rooted in a commitment to educational change. The young teacher needs to be prepared, not by socializing him to the existing structure and form of the school, but by preparing him to participate in the recreation of educational forms and substance" (p.6).

As well he states that "A teacher education program has to be integrated with schools and clinics where educational experimentation is the norm" (p.7).

P. McDermott, K. Gormley, K. Rothenberg, J. Hammer (1985)

The Influence of Classroom Practice Experiences on Student Teachers' Thoughts about Teaching. Journal of Teacher Education, 46(3), 184-191.

McDermott, P., Gormley, K., Rothenberg, J., & Hammer (1995) indicated that, "improved classroom practica experiences accelerate novice teachers' growth towards expert pedagogy. Practica experiences, especially those in which novices receive extensive and varied classroom experiences and constructive evaluations about their teaching, help new teachers move more quickly to more mature thoughts about their teaching and children's learning" (p. 191).

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Thinking Like a Teacher

"Several models of teachers' professional development illustrate how novice teachers mature in their thinking about teaching (Berliner, 1986; Fuller, 1969; Kagan, 1992); a synthesis of these models reveals three general patterns. In the earliest stages of their development, novices self-consciously think about themselves as teachers. Typical concerns at this initial stage reflect uncertainty and include whether they can imagine themselves as classroom leaders and assume the general responsibilities of classroom teachers (Fuller, 1969; Kagan, 1992). As they wrestle with and overcome these self-doubts, they evolve further in their thinking about teaching (Kagan, 1992). In the second stage of teacher development, novice teachers' thoughts move from a focus on themselves to concerns about managing pupils and learning classroom procedures; they think about managing and organizing their classrooms, planning lessons, and presenting information clearly (Fuller, 1969; Kagan, 1992). At the third stage of teacher development, novices attend to childrens' actual learning. Because at this point in their development novice teachers' procedural skills are more automatic, they can focus their thoughts on whether they have successfully helped children learn (Berliner, 1986; Fuller, 1969; Kagan, 1992). These stages collectively suggest progression in novices' growth from thinking about identities as teachers, to concerns about classroom procedures and routines, and finally to more complex and sophisticated thoughts about relationships between their pedagogy and children's learning" (p. 184).

B. Tabachnick and K. Zeichner (1984)
The Impact of the Student Teaching Experience on the Development of
Teachers' Perspectives

A study conducted by Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984) reported that student teachers entered the program "with different teaching perspectives and that significant differences among students remained at the end of the semester" (p.33).

K. Zeichner and D. Liston (1987)
Teaching Student Teachers to Reflect

"It is important to provide diverse conceptual frameworks for analyzing the work of the teacher. Student teachers are encouraged to use these frameworks in order to reflect upon, analyze, understand, and evaluate their practical situations. The students examine their own metaorientations by becoming active in the learning process - responding and criticizing the concepts that underlie the program and the frameworks introduced in seminars" (p.27).

Zeichner and Liston (1987) have identified the constructs of educating students in a reflective manner; students are "to view their knowledge and their contexts as problematic; to view the teacher as a moral craftsperson; to approach the knowledge offered in the program reflexively; and to interact with their fellow student teachers, instructors, and supervisors in a collaborative fashion" (p.40).

"Learning, for both pupils and teachers is greatly enhanced when teachers are encouraged to navigate and give direction to the content and processes of their work" (Zeichner, Liston, 1987) (p.45).

J. Roebuck, C. Green, T. McMahn and S. Buck (1994)
Cohort Placement of Teacher Interns in Public Schools

"Students placed in districts with three or more interns, student teachers informally reported access to peer reflective practices and a better understanding of professional relationships including idea networking" (p.5).

Frank Smith
Let's Declare Education a Disaster and Get on With Our Lives

Frank Smith concludes that, "Learning is also the physical growth in that it usually occurs without our being aware of it, it is long-lasting and it requires a nurturing environment. It takes place as a result of social relationships (including relationships with the authors of books and with

characters in books). It pivots on personal identification. We learn from the kind of person we see ourselves as being like. Such conditions are annihilated by information - transmission teaching and constant testing" (p. 589).

John Dewey
Democracy and Education

John Dewey states that, "life is development, and that developing, growing, is life. Translated into its educational equivalents, that means that the educational process has no end beyond itself; it is its own end; and that the educational process is one of continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming" (p. 50).

Theme VI

Governance/Politics and University Partnerships

The Students' Metaphorical Language

- ▶ shut the door in our faces
- ▶ we had to get over a big wall
- ▶ rumours on the mill
- ▶ nail was in the coffin
- ▶ giving me a run-around
- ▶ bit of a fiasco
- ▶ caused pretty bad blood between
some people

Theme VI

Governance & Political Tension

Many students were concerned with the governance and political turmoil associated with the University of Lethbridge off-campus cohort program. Many students were reassured in the beginning they would not feel separate from the University but, as the semester progressed, many felt isolated and were concerned with other issues:

- The students were concerned if they would be stereotyped or treated differently in P.S.2.
- Some students were concerned that the Medicine Hat experience would work against them.
- The students felt very uneasy with regard to the secretive nature of the University withholding important information.
- Many students were disappointed P.S.2 was rejected and felt certain many professors did not wish to continue the off campus program.
- There was some concern voiced by P.S.1 students regarding the nature of various students being coerced into taking P.S.1 in Medicine Hat, Alberta.
- Some students voiced a concern with regard to informing the U. of L. that they are University of Lethbridge students, they pay the same fees and thus expect the same service.

Many other comments regarded as rumours, were voiced. These comments, concerns and feelings, contributed to their feelings of lack of support, isolation and frustration.

"I sometimes wonder if students or faculty on campus question the quality of education we're getting here. I just wonder if my Medicine Hat experience will ever work against me. That I wasn't on campus enough. But I feel that I'm getting excellent experience and that overall the instructors we've had have just been excellent."

"The university needed a higher awareness that we were here... Like I've been going there for three years and I phone up there and just like... I'm in Medicine Hat I don't have a car, can you help me with this. They're just not

helpful at all."

"There was stuff that was said that was said at a meeting that I think has caused some pretty bad blood between some people."

"But they were all upset, probably because there was a lack of communication on that part as well too. So we were told to do a community service thing to see if we could boost our image."

"Making them aware at the University, P.S.1 students are part of this. We have paid these fees and they expect the same service that...??? be thrilled by this, you're part of the University, the University of Medicine Hat campus. It was over and over and yet you don't get the same kind of treatment that you would if you were up there."

"I would recommend it, if it was their choice. I know that 50% of the students that were almost coerced into having to come here. If you want in the Ed. Faculty then you're going to have to go to Medicine Hat. And that was a big issue for me. If I had not accepted coming to Medicine Hat I wouldn't have been able to start this September. There were a lot of politics going on there that....I have to talk to the Dean about that."

"There's a lot of rumours flying around. But that would have been nice if had they come right out and said "This is the deal guy." But I think there was a big wall that we had to get over."

B. Summary of Professional Semester 1

Students' Questionnaire

Medicine Hat, Alberta

Fall \approx 1995

The following summary examines the perspectives, ideas and general attitudes of the Professional Semester 1 students who participated in the University of Lethbridge off-campus pilot project in Medicine Hat, Alberta. Twenty-one students voluntarily responded to questions and statements related to field experiences, assignments and modules. The written comments have been summarized in paragraph form, while the quantitative responses have been summarized in tables. Being mindful of the significance regarding gender equity, I have taken the liberty to alternate pronouns he and she, in an effort to enhance readability and continuity of written responses.

Section I: General Questions About P.S.1

General Questions About P.S.1

Question	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
P.S.1 was extremely stressful	1	4.8	1	4.8	9	42.9	9	42.9	1	4.8
Workload of P.S.1 was reasonable	1	4.8	4	19.0	5	23.8	11	52.4	0	0
Sufficient space left for other things in life	1	4.8	6	28.6	6	28.6	3	14.3	5	23.8
Design of P.S.1 encouraged competitiveness	1	4.8	7	33.3	7	33.3	4	19.0	2	9.5
Overall P.S.1 was a positive experience	0	0	0	0	3	14.3	7	33.3	11	52.4

General Comments Regarding Professional Semester 1

The responses regarding general questions about P.S.1 varied greatly. Two students stated that they enjoyed the small group encounter and found the P.S.1 experience

very personal, supportive, meaningful and would recommend it to others. One student thought that being involved in a pilot project was risky but very rewarding. Another felt that P.S.1 in Medicine Hat was a great experience and the instructors made it a very positive experience. It was reported by one student that she was pleased with the support and guidance from her teacher associate.

In contrast to these positive comments, three students felt the workload was quite heavy and experienced anxiety over performance. It was indicated that preparing lesson plans and completing assignments for courses during P.S.1 added to this workload. One student felt the expectations placed on students by his teacher associate was very high and demanding. As well, another student commented that the placement was very positive and she learned a great deal from her teacher associate but was unhappy with the classes at Elm Street School. It was recorded by a student that there was a lack of communication with the University of Lethbridge (part of a general feeling of "lack of support" from U. of L. in terms of resources, telephone, fax and E-mail). It was felt the university did not take into consideration the mileage involved in driving to the university and the fact that some class members did not have cars. Finally, a student indicated that paired placements encouraged competitiveness while another indicated that the Elm Street classes were redundant at times.

Section II: Comments Regarding Assignments

Comments Regarding Assignments

Two students felt that it would be beneficial if the instructors could coordinate their tests and assignment dates, as well as the nature and structure of activities. Similar

assignments were completed in many modules. As well, it was suggested by one student that instructors should provide relevant, useful assignments. With regard to completing assignments, it was suggested that the faculty can help students cope by allowing adequate time to complete activities. Four students experienced a concern that carrying out half days of teaching and participating in classroom instruction was very challenging. It was suggested that if the U of L carries out this project again, it would be beneficial to adapt assignments, especially while the practicum is "on the go." One student commented just making sure the students are coping is sufficient. Another student believed the faculty was extremely accommodating in order to alleviate stress. Extensions were granted whenever required, and all necessary materials needed were provided.

Section III: Field Experience

Field Experience

Question	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Received sufficient feedback from Teacher Associate	0	0	0	0	3	15.8	3	15.8	13	68.4
Received sufficient feedback from Faculty Supervisor	2	10.5	0	0	3	15.8	11	57.9	3	15.8
Would have preferred paired placement in P.S.1	6	35.3	3	5.9	3	5.9	4	23.5	1	5.9

Comments On Field Experience

A total of 13 comments were made by students regarding field experience. Six

students commented on paired placements. It was indicated by two students that P.S.1 was an enjoyable learning experience. Another student reported that near the beginning of P.S.1 the feeling was one of apprehension. This student was very unsure about having two student teachers in a classroom at one time. However, near the end of the practicum, there was a feeling of appreciation towards student teacher peers. One student indicated that the practicum experience was the highlight of P.S.1. Another believed the paired placements were a chancy endeavour, although she "got lucky" and enjoyed the experience. Two students had negative comments regarding paired placements. One student enjoyed being on his own because it allowed for freedom to try new things - frequently. Another student indicated that the paired placement was very difficult.

Five additional comments were made regarding field experience. Two students indicated they learned a lot from their teacher associates. They particularly enjoyed the simultaneous experience of practicum and university class to facilitate the bridging of theory and practice. Two additional students made comments with regard to learning many beneficial teaching strategies and techniques. They said their teacher associates were excellent and the feedback was very beneficial.

Two students commented on the support and guidance of supervisors and communication with the U.of L. in general. One student reported there needs to be more contact with the U. of L. This person felt very isolated. Another made a comment regarding the need for more faculty advisor visitations.

Addendum

The P.S.1 students completed questionnaires reflecting their own personal views and perspectives of the off-campus educational modules. Since there was only one instructor for each P.S.1 module in Medicine Hat, sections IV to XI have been withdrawn to protect the privacy and confidentiality of those participating in the University of Lethbridge cohort pilot project.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study shed some light on the opinions, ideas and perspectives of P.S.1 students as well as describe the organizational structure of the University of Lethbridge off-campus cohort program from the students' perspective. Tuning into the students' language of perception and analyzing the results of this study confirm the benefits of offering this type of program.

- i. In general, the P.S.1 students felt greatly advantaged and very fortunate to have participated in the University of Lethbridge off-campus program. They felt the program was a positive experience - one which created leaders and responsible student teachers. The students also felt that they would recommend the program to other P.S.1 students, but there should be modifications.
- ii. The students felt fortunate to have developed a sense of shared experience and group dynamics. As a result there was a development of many permanent friendships and lasting ties. Students also felt a sense of professional socialization to assist in the collaborative and collegial nature of teaching. Feelings such as mutual respect and trust were also apparent which appeared to facilitate student teacher growth and learning.
- iii. Comments regarding the usefulness of peer placements were generally positive. Sharing the practicum with a student peer assisted in the development of an emotional support system, provided for a greater sense of risk taking in their teaching strategies, and supported the students

appreciation for receiving and supplying constructive criticism. There were a few concerns expressed. Some students felt a sense of competitiveness near the beginning of the practicum, although this sense of competition eased as the students worked together collaboratively. Others felt the added pressure and time constraints of dividing up instructional minutes between various student teacher peers.

- iv. Communication between instructors and student teachers encouraged reflection and inquiry-oriented interaction. As well, many students felt positive in their ability to give direction to their teaching and learning.
- v. Most students felt concepts covered in courses were applicable and the assignments were useful. They felt the assignments contributed to their development as teachers. The concerns expressed by some related to the redundancy and applicability of specific assignments. It was suggested by P.S.1 students that in utilizing a collaborative model, instructors could have worked together to coordinate assignments. In addition, they felt that many assignments should have been assigned during the first few weeks of the practicum when there were fewer demands of the program. As the program progressed, some students felt that the workload requirements of the cohort program was quite heavy. Others felt that the pressure and demands of the program served as a vehicle to improve organizational and time management skills.
- vi. Many comments expressed by the students were very reflective nature and

described their feelings about learning to be a teacher. It is very evident that many P.S.1 student teachers are beginning to "think like a teacher" and are growing professionally. Many student teachers tried to make sense of the educational pedagogy presented to them and responded in analytical and reflective ways.

- vii. At times the students felt isolated and ostracized due to lack of communication with the University of Lethbridge and other organizational problems which are outlined in this document. The students recommend the importance of providing the necessary tools to help them feel part of the university - e-mail, fax, telephone, computers, and so on.
- viii. The students voiced a concern regarding the governance and political turmoil associated with their participation in the P.S.1 cohort program. They felt separate from the University and, as a result, concerned about being stereotyped. Other issues included the feeling that some students were coerced into participating in the cohort program and felt ostracized in part because they felt information was being withheld from students.
- ix. The P.S.1 students understood the significance of linking theory and practice and enjoyed the structure of the program. As a result, students could relate to their assignments and find meaning in their course work. As well, the practical and personal experiences assisted the students to generate questions and encouraged risk taking which in turn fostered self-analysis, introspection and reflection.

The University of Lethbridge must be applauded for its challenge to find ways to assist practicing teachers in all aspects of student teaching. In the challenge of restructuring and reform, the University must continue to create ethical teachers who will become collaborative, reflective, inquiry-centered, pedagogical stewards, firm in the knowledge that they will some day assume the responsibility of shaping the direction of public education. In this way our aspiring teachers will be equipped with the essential prerequisites to nurture our most cherished and valuable resource - our nation's children.

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PROFESSIONAL SEMESTER I

Student Questionnaire

General Questions About PS1

Rate each of the following statements where **1** indicates **Strongly Disagree** and **5** is **Strongly Agree**.

PS1 was extremely stressful	1	2	3	4	5
The workload of PS1 was reasonable	1	2	3	4	5
I had sufficient space left in my life for other important things (e.g. family) during PS1	1	2	3	4	5
The design of PS1 encouraged competitiveness	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, PS1 was a positive experience	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

General Questions about Modules

As before, rate the following statements where **1** indicates **Strongly Disagree** and **5** is **Strongly Agree**.

Including this module in PS1 contributed to my development as a teacher.

Language in Education	1	2	3	4	5
Curriculum and Instruction	1	2	3	4	5
Evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
Media	1	2	3	4	5
Computers	1	2	3	4	5
Teaching Seminar	1	2	3	4	5
Educational Psychology	1	2	3	4	5

Please comment on any change you would make to the selection of courses offered in PS1.

Specific Module Questions

Rate each of the modules in the following areas where **1** indicates **Strongly Disagree** and **5** is **Strongly Agree**.

1. Language in Education

- a. Concepts and activities were applicable to my preparation as a teacher 1 2 3 4 5
- b. Assignments were useful and relevant to my preparation as a teacher 1 2 3 4 5
- c. Assignments were useful and relevant to my work in the practicum 1 2 3 4 5
- d. Number of hours of classtime assigned was adequate to cover the content 1 2 3 4 5
- e. Workload was appropriate 1 2 3 4 5
- f. The most positive aspect of this module was _____

- g. An aspect of this module which could have been improved was _____

Comments:

2. Curriculum and Instruction

- a. Concepts were applicable to my work in the practicum 1 2 3 4 5
- b. Assignments were useful and relevant to my preparation as a teacher 1 2 3 4 5
- c. Number of hours of classtime assigned was adequate to cover the contact 1 2 3 4 5

- d. Workload was appropriate 1 2 3 4 5
- e. The most positive aspect of this module was _____

- f. An aspect of this module which could have been improved was _____

Comments:

3. Evaluation

- a. Concepts were applicable to my work in the practicum 1 2 3 4 5
- b. Assignments were useful and relevant to my preparation as a teacher 1 2 3 4 5
- c. Number of hours of classtime assigned was adequate to cover the content 1 2 3 4 5
- d. Workload was appropriate 1 2 3 4 5
- e. The most positive aspect of this module was _____

- f. An aspect of this module which could have been improved was _____

Comments:

4. Media

- a. Having Media as a "self directed" study was a good idea 1 2 3 4 5
- b. Timetable slot was satisfactory 1 2 3 4 5
- c. Workload was appropriate 1 2 3 4 5
- d. The most positive aspect of this module was _____

- e. An aspect of this module which could have been improved was _____

Comments:

5. Computers

- a. Room was satisfactory 1 2 3 4 5
- b. Timetable slot was satisfactory 1 2 3 4 5
- c. The most positive aspect of this module was _____

- d. An aspect of this module which could have been improved was _____

Comments:

6. Teaching Seminar

- a. Concepts were applicable to my work
 in the practicum 1 2 3 4 5

- b. Assignments were useful and relevant to my preparation as a teacher 1 2 3 4 5
- c. Number of hours of classtime assigned was adequate to cover the content 1 2 3 4 5
- d. Workload was appropriate 1 2 3 4 5
- e. The most positive aspect of this module was _____

- f. An aspect of this module which could have been improved was _____

7. Educational Psychology

- a. Concepts were applicable to my work in the practicum 1 2 3 4 5
- b. Assignments were useful and relevant to my preparation as a teacher 1 2 3 4 5
- c. Number of hours of classtime assigned was adequate to cover the content 1 2 3 4 5
- d. Workload was appropriate 1 2 3 4 5
- e. The most positive aspect of this module was _____

- f. An aspect of this module which could have been improved was _____

Comments:

Assignments

The nature of some PS1 assignments require that work be completed during the practicum. Please comment on how faculty could help students better cope with the simultaneous demands of campus and school duties?

Field Experience

Please respond to the following questions where 1 indicates **Strongly Disagree** and 5 is **Strongly Agree**.

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Received sufficient feedback from my Teacher Associate during the practicum | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. I received sufficient feedback from my Faculty Supervisor during the practicum | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. One section placed two students in a single classroom. Given a choice, I would have preferred a paired placement in PS1 | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Further Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire.

GENERAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

P.S.1 Off-Campus Teacher Education Program

1. How has this first student teaching experience influenced your motivation to teach?
2. Please describe an encouraging moment of this student teaching experience.
3. Describe a discouraging moment of this student teaching experience.
4. Having nearly completed your Professional Semester 1 studies in Medicine Hat, what, if anything, would you change about your teacher education program?
5. What are your greatest concerns regarding the teacher education program being offered in Medicine Hat?
6. What have been the most positive aspects regarding participation in the Professional Semester 1 off-campus teacher education program in Medicine Hat?
7. Do you feel your instructors in Medicine Hat are fulfilling your Professional Semester 1 educational needs?
8. Do you feel disadvantaged in any way by receiving your P.S.1 program off the main campus of the U. of L.?
9. Would you recommend this off-campus program to other Professional Semester 1 students attending the University of Lethbridge
10. Please comment on the scheduling of classes. e.g. A.M. vs. P.M.

Specific Questions Relating to Student Teacher Peers

1. What are the greatest advantages of sharing your Professional Semester 1 practicum with a student teacher peer?
2. What are the greatest disadvantages of sharing your Professional Semester 1 practicum with a student teacher peer?
3. What are you learning from your student teacher peer?
4. How are you learning from your student teacher peer?
5. Explain your relationship and general attitude toward working with your student teacher peer.
6. Do you think student teacher peers make a contribution in the process of learning to teach?

Appendix C**Consent Letter**

Dear Professional Semester 1 Student, Medicine Hat Project:

I am conducting a study to determine the effectiveness, function and practicality of the University of Lethbridge off-campus teacher education program. The purpose of this study is to examine perspectives, ideas and general attitudes of Professional Semester 1 Students' participating in the program, in order to assess its strengths and weaknesses.

You are being asked to complete a questionnaire and, if you agree, to consent to a follow-up interview conducted by myself, JoAnne Cowie.

The information gathered in this study will be shared with all participants before it is published. You are assured all identifying information will be kept confidential, your privacy will be protected and your anonymity guaranteed. All names of schools, teacher associates, colleagues and students will be kept out of any published material flowing from this study.

You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time, without prejudice.

I very much appreciate your assistance in this study. If you have any questions please call me at 529-5516 (work), 529-5165 (home) or call Dr. Townsend at (403) 329-2731 (work) or 328-0819 (home). You may also contact the Chair of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee, Dr. Peter Chow, 329-2443, if you need additional advice or information.

Yours sincerely,

JoAnne Cowie
Master of Education Student

Evaluation of U. of L. Off-Campus Teacher Education Program

I have read and understand the contents of the consent letter. I agree to participate.

Name: _____
(please print)

Signed: _____

Appendix D**Consent Letter**

Dear Instructor of P.S.1 modules, Medicine Hat Project:

I am conducting a study to determine the effectiveness, function and practicality of The University of Lethbridge off-campus teacher education program. The purpose of this study is to examine perspectives, ideas and general attitudes of Professional Semester 1 Students participating in the program, in order to assess its strengths and weaknesses.

In order to effectively obtain useful information for this study, I have decided to employ a two-fold method of data collection. One phase of collecting data consists of using a P.S.1 questionnaire requiring twenty seven students to rank their responses on a Likert-type scale. A second phase will centre on a series of formal interviews conducted with five groups of four students.

Appreciating that the subject group in Medicine Hat is limited in size and that there is only one section of P.S.1 modules in this area, the results obtained from the students' completed questionnaires will reflect their own personal views and perspectives regarding the off-campus educational modules. Enclosed is a copy of the questionnaire which will be completed by P.S.1 students participating in this study. Please feel free to review this questionnaire before agreeing to sign this consent letter.

You are assured all identifying information will be kept confidential, your privacy will be protected and your anonymity guaranteed. All names of instructors, teacher associates, colleagues and students will be kept out of any published material flowing from this study. The information gathered in this study will be shared with all participants before it is published.

I very much appreciate your assistance in this study. If you have any questions in this regard, please call me at 529-5516 (work), 529-5165 (home) or call Dr. David Townsend at (403) 329-2731 (work) or 328-0819 (home). You may also contact the Chair of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee, Dr. Peter Chow, 329-2443, if you need additional advice or information.

Yours sincerely,

JoAnne Cowie
Master of Education Student

Evaluation of U. of L. Off-Campus Teacher Education Program

I have read and understand the contents of the consent letter. I understand that the information compiled from the student questionnaires will be used in this research project and may provide a basis for further discussion regarding the new off-campus U. of L. Student Teaching Program.

Name: _____
(please print)

Signed: _____