CONTEXTUAL FACTORS OF UNSUCCESSFUL
TEACHING PRACTICA:
The perspective of the teacher candidate

by

ATHANASIA VENTOURAS

B.Sc., Simon Fraser University, 2003
B.Ed., Simon Fraser University, 2007

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Curriculum Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

April 2016

Abstract

Failure, or the need to repeat a practicum, in the Teacher Education program occurs for approximately 10% of teacher candidates (Clarke, 2015). This study examined ways in which the practicum context served or hindered teacher candidates who were required to repeat their practicum. Data were collected by an anonymous online survey of teachers who repeated and subsequently completed their practicum [to determine the factors believed to have contributed to their need to repeat their practicum], followed by interviews of three survey participants. Experiences of the researcher are also included in the data set.

Five themes emerged from the data as contributing factors to needing to repeat a practicum. They are: excessive workload, inappropriate feedback, poor relationships with mentors, role models who could not demonstrate best practice, and personal limitations. The results of this study confirm the importance of attending to contexts of the practicum setting. In particular, there is a need for mentoring practices to be refined. The results also support the need for a more integrated approach to teacher education.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work of the author, A. Ventouras. The

fieldwork reported in Chapters 2- 4 was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate number H12-01954.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

This study has been made possible by the support of many people. First, I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Anthony Clarke of the University of British Columbia. His expertise, wisdom, sharing of knowledge, and support has been inspiring and has made it possible for me to work in an area that has been of great interest to me. The learning environment was both supportive and motivating.

Secondly, I would like to thank my committee members: Dr. Samson Nashon and Dr. Cynthia Nicol of the University of British Columbia. This thesis is a culmination of the topics I began to explore in their courses and through my interactions with them.

I would also like to express gratitude to Dr. J. Gary Knowles of the University of Toronto for being so generous to provide me with copies of his papers in my subject area and a copy of his book. These provided the inspiration and starting points for my own research.

Third, I recognize that the data collected in this study could not have been made possible without the support of the "University of Canada" Teacher Education Office and the cooperation of the participants in the study.

Most importantly, I thank my incredibly loving husband, Alexander and my two living children, Amalea and Paris who have given the encouragement and motivation to see this study through to its completion. Lastly, I also thank my parents, Georgia and Peter, whose attitude in life and

learning has instilled in me a self-belief that has sustained me throughout my journey. I am also

grateful to my friends for their support and patience during this study.

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my three children, Amalea, Paris, and my fleeting angel, Adriana, who we lost to the heavens just weeks after collecting the data for this study. They have made me stronger and braver than I ever could have imagined.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

On a cool and sunny day in April, I waited for my faculty advisor (also referred to as faculty

associate or teacher educator) to bring the paperwork confirming my withdrawal from the

Teacher Education program. With my head down, I quietly gathered the last of my belongings in

the school's communal science department office. Several teachers entered the room as I

gathered my belongings and gave me a brief and uncomfortable smile. The other teacher

candidates (sometimes referred to as student teachers, practicing teachers, or pre-service

teachers) at my practicum school and the members of my Bachelor of Education cohort of thirty-

two students had successfully completed their practica two weeks earlier. I was completely

alone. I had been asked to extend my time in the school by an additional two weeks in the hopes

of "pulling it all together" at the last moment. But I didn't. The practicum had been both

mentally and physically exhausting. I had lost 30 pounds since beginning the practicum in

January. I was drained, tired, and lonely.

I sat in an awkward meeting with my faculty advisor and two mentor teachers (also referred to as

cooperating teachers and school associates). My failure to complete the practicum, a major

component (35%) of the Teacher Education program, had serious ramifications. The conditions

for re-entry to the program were laid out. I needed to successfully complete my coursework over

the summer, read five specified professional development books (more, if I wanted to really

impress), observe/volunteer with teachers in classrooms, and submit an application for review.

To close the meeting, my faculty advisor asked me if I wanted anything else from my mentor

teachers. Weary and confused, I knew I wouldn't be able to recall much of what was discussed

over the previous few weeks. I asked for a teaching report so that I would have, in writing, the things I needed to continue to work on. They agreed. We signed the necessary paperwork and then my faculty advisor took me for a walk. I had always been a good student and a hard-working individual. This was the first time I had ever been confronted with academic failure. The last remark from them is still stuck in my mind:

> You just need a bit more time. Everything will be OK; the students love you. (Faculty
> Advisor, Personal Communication, 2005)

At that point, it wasn't OK and it certainly didn't matter that the students loved me, not to me or to my mentors and faculty advisor. When I began my journey to becoming a teacher, I did so with the best intentions. I wanted to inspire my students the way I was inspired by a select few when I was in school. Over the course of my education as a student in schools, I had several admirable experiences with teacher candidates and teachers who showed refreshing hopefulness, creativity, and enthusiasm for the art and profession of teaching. I was never aware of problems they may have had in their journey to become teachers.   I was both surprised and shocked at the obstacles that I encountered.

I never got the teaching reports I asked for.

I had failed my practicum and was asked to withdraw from the teacher education program following approximately fifteen weeks of practicum teaching that consisted of, what felt like, an accumulation of 'unjust conditions.' It was the most disappointing and embarrassing moment of my life. As a result, I would have to wait until the following year to repeat the practicum, I was

going to incur additional financial costs (to an already high tuition fee burden), and most significantly, I felt that I had lost my sense of dignity. The experience of failing the practicum has remained with me and I continue to reflect on it. After successfully completing my repeat practicum in the following year, I wondered: "If I had it in me to become a successful teacher, what was it about my first practicum that prevented me from coming to the necessary understanding of best practice and successfully applying that in a classroom setting?"

This study is about practicum failure and presents an account of that phenomenon; one that is not often encountered in the literature or spoken about in public. In the following sections of this chapter, the rationale, purpose, and methods used in this study will be outlined. An overview of this study will also be provided.

1.1 Rationale for the Study

Failure to complete the practicum is not entirely uncommon. For example, approximately 10% of teacher candidates in the University of British Columbia Bachelor of Education program do not complete the practicum (Clarke, 2015). However, there is very little literature addressing the causes of a failed practicum. It seems that it is a taboo topic amongst scholars, an ugly mark on the Teacher Education program, and an unexplored dimension of Teacher Education. A Google Scholar search using the terms "fail", "practicum", and "education" revealed only two relevant but dated papers. On the other hand, a large number of mentor teachers or faculty advisors will likely have and willingly share stories of teacher candidates who failed the practicum (either their own teacher candidates or those of colleagues). Clarke (2003) reports that 25% of all school advisors at the University of British Columbia have failed a student teacher during their time as practicum supervisors. Often, "the problem (of a failed practicum) is couched in terms of

what the pre-service teacher could not accomplish in the period of practice" (Knowles, Cole, & Presswood, 2008, p. 300). This usually includes program learning outcomes such as planning, preparation, understanding and meeting students' needs, building relationships with students, difficulties with classroom management, and creating classroom environments conducive to learning. The pre-service teacher might also be described as having inadequate, non-existent, or inflexible philosophies or underestimating the practical demands of teaching (Knowles, Skrobola, & Coolican, 1995).

Contextual factors can also be an additional cause of problems in the practicum. For the purposes of this study, contextual factors include any facts, statistics, or characteristics of the environment that play into the way in which a practicum proceeds or is conducted; contextual factors are generally out of the locus of control of the teacher candidate. Despite the importance of the practicum experience, and the fact that contextual factors represent a large portion of the educative experience in that setting, "little attention has been given to the contexts in which pre-service teachers are placed" (Knowles, Cole, & Presswood, 2008, p. 100). The issue of context is important and I have come to believe that if a student fails to meet learning outcomes it is, in part, the result of insufficient attention to their emotional and intellectual needs as learners. Teaching and learning are considered social activities that imply relationships between teachers and their students. Social constructivism acknowledges the significance of the social context of learning (Claxton, 1996). In the case of teacher education, this would require positive relationships between the teacher candidate and their faculty advisor(s) and mentor teacher(s) in addition to relationships with other teacher candidates. Yet somehow, little attention has been given to the importance of the relationship that goes on between a mentor and a teacher

candidate (and his or her faculty supervisors) and this relationship has received very little attention in the literature (Glickman & Bey, 1990; Haigh & Ward, 2004; Hastings & Squires, 2002; Sanders, Dowson, & Sinclair, 2005). Clearly, "[w]hat is also needed is access to and participation in the teacher thinking and reasoning that makes this classroom hum" (Margolis, 2007, p. 76). As Sudzina and Knowles (1993) provocatively argue, "allowing individuals to fail because of professional negligence in offering support, supervision, and compatible school placement is unethical" (p. 261).

Although I had suspected that it was the contexts of the learning environment that prevented me from being successful in the practicum, I did not anticipate how important context was to the experiences of other teachers I met who had also withdrawn from their practicum placements. In this paper, I hope to shine some light on this difficult and challenging issue by speaking to the experiences of teacher candidates who were asked to repeat or withdraw from their practicum.

1.2 Purpose for the Study

The overall purpose of this study is to explore the nature of a 'failed' practicum experience from the perspective of teacher candidates who withdrew from their original practicum and then subsequently successfully completed a repeat practicum as part of a Bachelor of Education program. Specifically, the intent of this study is to provide an opportunity for teacher candidates to discuss the issues that they felt hindered their ability to meet the learning outcomes for a successful practicum during their initial placement, and hopefully elucidate some of the contextual factors pertaining to those experiences. The story of the failed practicum needs to be told because it is unfamiliar in many ways, because it sounds impossible, and because the details are critical to understanding the perspective of a teacher candidate in such circumstances. The

stories in this study make people feel uncomfortable; it is "difficult knowledge" (Janzen, 2015), and as such, acts as an important prompt to think more deeply about what it means to become a teacher.

The guiding research question for this inquiry is:

> *From the perspective of those who have been required to repeat a practicum, what can we learn to help us better understand how, and in what ways, the practicum context served or hindered the learning needs of the teacher candidate?*

1.3 Overview of the Methodology

This study follows the qualitative research tradition in that it attempts to explore the lived experiences of a group of individuals (Boylorn, 2008). Drawing on my own experiences and the experience of three other teacher candidates, the data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The method followed a three-step process of unitizing, categorizing, and thematizing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

> The process involved successive data reduction by first noting key ideas and then constantly comparing and contrasting those ideas repeatedly with each other until distinct categories emerged and clear and unambiguous definitions could be assigned to each category. The categories were then subjected to a further round of constant comparison leading to a higher level of abstraction, which became the key themes reported in this study. (Wang & Clarke, in press).

Five emergent themes emerged from the analysis of the data and are discussed in the results section of this paper.

1.4 Overview of the Study

Chapter One introduces and briefly outlines the study in terms of rationale, purpose, and methodology. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature on teacher candidates and Teacher Education. Chapter Three describes the methodology used in this study. Chapter Four explores the experiences described by teacher candidates who were asked to repeat their practicum and presents the emergent themes. In Chapter Five, I discuss issues and conclusions, including measures for addressing contexts of the practicum.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 The Social Constructivist Teacher Education Program

Many education programs are premised on a social constructivist learning approach, which was originally laid out by scholars such as Dewey (Dewey, 1902/1956), Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1962), and Piaget (Piaget & Inhelder, 1962). The basic tenets are as follows: knowledge is actively constructed by learners, knowledge is experience based (in order to interpret new ideas), learning is social (in order to give rise to dialogue about the subject), learning is dependent on all aspects of the learner (for example, their interests), and learning communities should be inclusive (to allow the learner to construct knowledge from their own point of view) (Beck & Kosnik, 2006).

"In most people's minds, *constructivism* refers to the philosophical belief that people construct their own understanding of reality" (Oxford, Constructivism: shape-shifting, substance, and teacher education, 1997). However, *social constructivism* acknowledges the significance of the social context of learning; knowledge is both personally constructed and socially mediated (Claxton, 1996). "[T]he fact that we construct our knowledge does not mean that it is just an individual, subjective matter, without external reference. On the contrary, our knowledge is heavily influenced by experience of life and the world and by dialogue with others" (Beck & Kosnik, 2006, p. 10). Social constructivist theory, one of the most predominant philosophies currently guiding teacher education programs, is taught to pre-service teachers through the modeling of constructivist techniques. The hope is that pre-service teachers will experience a learning environment different from more 'direct instructional' methods that they may have experienced in schools themselves, and also construct the 'necessary conceptual understandings' about this approach to learning (Klein, 2001).

Teacher candidates come to education programs with a wide range of conceptions, world views, cultures, and learning styles that must be first acknowledge and also be respected within the learning setting for authentic engagement between the [mentor] teacher and the teacher candidate to take place; wherein the teacher candidate feels heard, respected, and understood. The nature of the social constructivist approach is based on a number of assumptions about the learner, which are sometimes overlooked in teacher education. For example, faculty advisors, who work with teacher candidates in practice settings, often place faith in the "naturally 'supportive' environment of the constructivist classroom and assume that it is equally supportive of all participants" (Klein, 2001) and that teacher candidates are fully cognizant of this perspective on learning. However, "if students have no past experiences of social constructivist classrooms, they are likely to have difficulty understanding what such classrooms might look like" (Noel, 2000). Further, they might find themselves in practicum learning contexts, which are not attentive to, or supportive of, social constructivist ways of learning upon which their programs and learning within those programs has been premised. As such, their own learning as a teacher candidate is seriously compromised (Mimbs-Johnson, 2009).

Further, Beck and Kosnik (2006) remind us that "[a] key implementation of the constructivist paradigm for Teacher Education is that student teachers should have time and encouragement to reflect on what they are learning" (Beck & Kosnik, 2006, p. 10). As the journey through the Teacher Education program progresses, so should the pre-service teacher progress through the journey of understanding ideas of 'good teaching' practice. Constructivism requires a judgment, or filtering, of new information against old ideas (or conceptions) held about teaching and

learning (Oxford, 1997; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Kagan, 1992). The learner will hopefully take up new ideas once the conditions of a conceptual change are met (Posner, Strike, Hewson, & Gertzog, 1982). For this to occur, first, the learner must be dissatisfied with existing conceptions because they cannot solve encountered inconsistencies between what they know and what they observe. Second, the idea must be intelligible; the pre-service teacher needs to have enough information to be able to see that other possibilities exist. Third, the idea must be plausible or consistent with other concepts already held by the learner. Lastly, the idea must be seen as fruitful as it should open up new areas of inquiry. Incomplete consideration of any of the conditions for conceptual change would inhibit learning from a constructivist perspective. This change becomes even more difficult to achieve when pre-service teachers themselves have no past experience as learners in classrooms that are guided by social constructivist perspective (Noel, 2000) and therefore might struggle to make sense of how learning might be supported and facilitated in such contexts.

Inquiry also involves moving back and forth between theory and practice because neither can be developed without the other (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). In other words, teacher candidates need many and varied opportunities to connect theory to practice because they are interdependent and essential for teacher candidates in interpreting the learning experiences that arise in their programs. The structure of Teacher Education courses then becomes even more important to teacher candidate learning. Many professional development programs do not offer a four-year concurrent Teacher Education program. Instead, teacher candidates obtain a four-year discipline-specific bachelor's degree in a 'teachable' area (e.g., Music, Mathematics, English) and then enter a one-year Bachelor of Education program (Beck & Kosnik, 2006) to qualify as

teachers. The short time span of the one-year Teacher Education program does not always allow teacher candidates to fully explore the important themes presented (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991) in the programs and makes it difficult for instructors/supervisors to establish relationships with their teacher candidates (Hastings W. , 2010). Again, learners need time to decide how and if what they are learning might be accommodated/altered in relation to their existing 'world views.' Thus, there are numerous challenges facing Teacher Education in an attempt to provide suitable learning experiences and contexts for beginning teachers.

The assumption that a constructivist classroom is naturally supportive of the learner, coupled with Dewey's humanistic approach means the finger of responsibility can quite easily be pointed directly at the learner; if the learner is responsible for their own learning, then they are surely also responsible for their own failures. From this perspective, failure to achieve conceptual change (i.e., learning) becomes a personal issue rather than a pedagogical or social issue. Hastings (2010), writing about how practicum supervisors conceive of their work notes that, "one of the most consistent and significant aspects [of her study] were the teachers' comments in relation to the pre-service teacher not 'being' and/or 'doing' what is expected either pedagogically, professionally, and/or personally" (p. 211). This issue of what is, or is not, expected of a teacher candidate raises signficant questions for Teacher Education and the demarkation between roles and responsibilties of those involved in the practicum setting.

According to Dewey (1903-1906), Teacher candidates need to spend more time in apprenticeship, slowly working their way up to doing the actual work of teaching instead of jumping in feet-first and hoping for the best. There need to be multiple opportunities for the

teacher candidate to move back and forth between inquiry and practice. However, this is not the case for many teacher education practica nowadays. If practicum experiences were interspersed among campus experiences, it would allow teacher candidates plenty of opportunities to apply the theory and then reflect on their practice and vice-versa (As an example, The University of British Columbia now offers a dual-degree option for teacher candidates to complete their Bachelor of Education alongside their teachable subject area.). As a result, teacher candidates would also have more opportunities to analyze the instructional decisions of others prior to their own 'lived experience' as teacher candidates in school classrooms (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991).

From a social constructivist approach, learning occurs through dialogue with others. This occurs when there is mutual support and other the teacher candidate's personal and emotional needs are met within a learning community (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; Tang, 2003). For this, a strong working/learning relationship is required. This is fostered through communication (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991), emotional support (kindness), being seen as a peer (allowing the teacher candidate to put their own stamp on the class and be in the role of the teacher), collaboration with the teacher candidates on lessons/strategies but not intervention during a lesson, and flexibility in content and method (Beck & Kosnik, 2002). And, Sudzina, Giebelhaus, and Coolican (1997) observe, conventional teacher candidate assessment practices in many instances "do not adequately reflect the quality of relationships, practicum placements, and expectations between cooperating and student teachers" (page 32).

2.2 Significance of the Practicum

The practicum is the most significant part of the program because it is here that theory and practice come into play together as teacher candidates learn to teach. As noted above, from a social constructivist point of view, inquiry into teaching involves moving back and forth between theory and practice (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). One of the most critical time periods in the development of teacher candidate beliefs and practice is when they first encounter the practicum settings.

Beck and Kosnik (2002) interviewed teacher candidates who described components of the practicum placement that made it 'good'. They described the importance of emotional support from the mentor teacher. Teacher candidates also felt that being seen/treated as a peer by the mentor teacher (rather than a student) allowed them to find their own place in the classroom and school, and allowed them to further develop professionally. Beyond that, having a collaborative relationship with the mentor teacher was also listed as an important element. Teacher candidates want to collaborate with their mentors on lessons, content knowledge, teaching strategies, and finding resources. However, teacher candidates do not want direct intervention when they are engaged in practice teaching. Beck and Kosnik (2002) also found that teacher candidates showed a serious interest in innovation as they described the importance of permission for flexibility in content and method. From the teacher candidates' perspective, feedback that is constructive, collegial in spirit, offers opportunity for dialogue, and does not take too long or does not occur too often was also highly valued. Furthermore, teacher candidates valued mentor teachers who had a sound approach to teaching and learning; thereby decreasing the chance of professional, moral, or psychological tension. Lastly, a heavy, but not excessive workload was

listed as ideal. Many, if not all, of these factors are consistent with the social constructivist paradigm. It is also interesting to note that the aspects necessary for a successful practicum environment that emerged in the analysis of the data for this study match the contextual factors highlighted as being missing in a failing a practicum described by Knowles, Cole, and Presswood (2008).

Nettle (1998) and Phelan (2001) argue that the practicum does little to change conceptions of teaching and learning. They argue that in many instances teacher candidates complete the program feeling more like it was something to get through, rather than something that might change their views and perspective. The practicum often subtly reinforces the status quo rather than challenging teacher candidates to think about new conceptions of teaching and learning. Further, Phelan (2006) explains that the teaching profession is characterized by sameness where individuals teach according to a common standard. New teachers are brought into the sameness by experienced professionals through the operation of power (p. 176). Mentor teachers think: I experienced my practicum and first few years of teaching like this, so this teacher candidate can do the same.

Going into the practicum, most teacher candidates have expectations that are quickly shattered by the day-today realities of schools (Kennedy, 2006). With support, this cognitive dissonance can elicit conceptual change. However, this can also sometimes have negative repercussions for the teacher candidate if the realities of schools do not match with the pre-conceptions held by the candidate (Beck & Kosnik, 2006) and the candidate's learning is not supported accordingly.

2.3 Significance of the Mentorship

As Loizou (2011) states, "mentoring is a multilayered process that can be examined from multiple perspectives and thus conceptualized differently" (p. 374). What cannot be disputed is that mentors play a significant role in the success of teacher candidates. They typically spend a great deal of time interacting with teacher candidates during the practicum. They are the gatekeepers; the ones who write the teaching report and who evaluate teacher candidates' growth in the profession (Clarke, Triggs, & Neilsen, 2014). They are an important source of support both during the practicum and, sometimes, after graduation as teacher candidates enter the profession. Mentor teachers also have the opportunity to influence modes of instruction, classroom management practices, and professional interactions of teacher candidates even if they offer conflicting views from those of the teacher candidates (Knowles, Cole, & Presswood, 2008).

Mentors comprise a large portion of the social dimension of the teacher education program and this is especially significant for teacher education program rooted in a social constructivist paradigm. Glickman and Bey (1990) note that teacher candidates consider the mentor teacher to be the most important factor in their entry into the profession. It is through classroom observations and dialogue with the mentors that teacher candidates can connect the theory learned to their own practice as teachers (Clarke, Triggs, & Neilsen, 2014). The hope is that mentors help prospective teachers gain important skills, knowledge, and beliefs that help them to teach in ways that are consistent with the changing context of schools today, and often different to how they were taught themselves.

Teacher candidates need access to the pedagogical knowledge of their mentor teacher. When teacher candidates have access to the knowledge that the mentor teachers (and faculty advisors) have, they can better become aware of, accommodate, and extend their own understanding of the "rules" that govern teaching practice (Chalies, Escalie, Bertone, & Clarke, 2012; Zanting, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2001). This can be initiated by asking a teacher candidate (e.g., through an assignment) to obtain the relevant information from the mentor about these dimensions of their practicum (Cole & Knowles, 1995; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Zanting, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2001) thereby encouraging teacher candidates to take a pro-active stance in their own professional development as teachers (Cole & Knowles, 1995). In addition, teacher candidates can undertake guided reflection and observations of experienced teachers (Loizou, 2011) as mentors demonstrate, articulate, and share their pedagogical knowledge (Hastings & Squires, 2002; Loizou, 2011).

Level of support, context, and beliefs of the mentor play a significant role in the outcomes of the teaching practicum. Tang (2003) studied the relationship between the level of risk and the level of support received in the creation of positive learning experiences. She found that contexts of high support produced the best learning experiences with the most conducive scenario being that of a challenging experience with an equally high level of mentor support. Mentors are important models of efficacy both through the guidance and feedback they provide (Fives, Hammam, & Olivarez, 2007) and the effective demonstration of good teaching practice (Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008). Knoblauch and Hoy (2008) reported that teacher candidates in more supportive environments had higher self-efficacy beliefs and that teacher candidates who viewed their mentor teacher as efficacious felt more efficacious, themselves. Furthermore, teacher candidates

who reported high levels of guidance from their cooperating teacher demonstrated lower levels of burnout at the end of their practicum (Fives, Hammam, & Olivarez, 2007). Attention to ccontext by (Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008) and support of (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Tang, 2003) mentors play an important role in the production of positive learning experiences for teacher candidates. Such issues are important within the context of Teacher Education and ought to be the subject of discussion in any process for selecting mentor teachers.

Teacher Education programs take great care in critically selecting faculty advisors that model best practice, yet mentor teachers are not subject to the same selection criteria (Sudzina, Giebelhaus, & Coolican, 1997). Mentor teachers are often chosen based on availability, location, and subjects and grade levels taught (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). They are not usually selected based on their skills, teaching philosophy, or knowledge about mentorship. As a result, many classroom teachers enter their supervisory role without a without any sort of professional development that helps them navigate the ways in which they are expected to participate in the practicum or the ways in which they are expected to work with teacher candidates (Boylorn, 2008). These mentors are, therefore, limited in their understandings and naturally turn to their own experience in Teacher Education as a reference (Knowles & Cole, 1996). Such mentors often overload teacher candidates with tasks and/or information and are unable to offer any substantive support to their students in interpreting that information within the practicum context; this work is left largely to the teacher candidate to do on his or her own.

While some may feel it is unethical to deliberately select mentor teachers based on a set of demonstrated 'competencies,' and tensions may sometimes arise due to this approach, ultimately

the well-being of the pre-service teacher should be of utmost priority (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). As an alternative to a strict selection process for mentor teachers, several studies have argued for the necessity of ensuring that mentor teachers are professionally prepared for their work (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Keogh, Dole, & Hudson, 2006; Keogh, Dole, & Hudson, 2006; Sudzina, Giebelhaus, & Coolican, 1997). However, the reality is, "that, traditionally, few cooperating teachers receive any training or support beyond written materials and/or a single orientation session" (Sudzina, Giebelhaus, & Coolican, 1997, p. 30).

Training of mentors is a major gap in the current system (Bariteau & Clarke, 2006). In the absence of a specific mentoring program, Loizou (2011) describes the role of the mentor as being "simply to collaborate, support, and guide student teachers during planning and lesson implementation" (p. 374). In her study, she found that mentors who had not undertaken any professional development for their role limited their feedback to technical issues and that elements related to quality teaching, psychology, pedagogy, and educational theories were rarely discussed. Also, as Borko and Mayfield (1995) discovered, when the assumption is that one learns to teach by practicing teaching in the classroom, mentor teachers and university supervisors tend to offer few suggestions and do little to challenge teacher candidate beliefs about teaching and learning. Teacher candidates, while attentive to, are sometimes unable to translate suggestions made by their mentors into action within the classroom without additional assistance from their mentors. Unfortunately, this is sometimes interpreted by mentors as teacher candidates ignoring their suggestions. Borko and Mayfield also noted a tendency among both classroom mentors and university supervisors to have harmonious interactions with their teacher candidates and avoid difficult conversations if at all possible.

Echoing the above comments, Keogh, Dole, and Hudson (2006) write "in the absence of mentor preparation programs and accreditation and acknowledgement of the important role that mentors play in the development of beginning teachers, practicum experiences can be of little value" (p. 4). To, in part, address this challenges, some researchers believe that we should re-think the role of the faculty advisor such that they help the mentor teachers become good mentors rather than provide trying to provide substantive feedback to their teacher candidates from the one or two lessons they able to observe (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Hastings & Squires, 2002; Margolis, 2007). Lastly, and least likely to be possible, more rigorous selection criteria could be incorporated to include only mentors who model best practice and/or who have completed professional development on mentoring practices (Bariteau & Clarke, 2006). This would require another level of teacher education that might only be possible in contexts such as the 'Professional Development School' model used widely in the United States. This model aims to facilitate learning communities where the teacher candidate is placed in one school for all field experiences. The sustained immersion occurs over one full school year. (Buzza, Kotsopoulos, & Mueller, 2010).

2.4 Factors of Poor Performance in Practica

Most teacher candidates complete the program, and move on to becoming successful, fulltime teachers. However, approximately 10% of teacher candidates do not complete the practicum (Clarke, 2015). This can be their own choice or on the recommendation of their mentor teacher or faculty advisor. They may or may not attempt to re-enter the program at a later date to complete the practicum and therefore the program. Knowles, Skrobola, and Coolican (1995)

extracted four clusters of issues, from the small body of literature on the topic, that contribute to teacher candidates not completing the practicum: (a) curriculum and instructional matters, (b) development of sense of self as a teacher, (c) contextual factors, and (d) past performance and personal histories.

2.4.1 Curriculum and Instructional Matters as Factors of Poor Performance.

In their study, Knowles, Skrobola, and Coolican (1995) asked supervisors to relate the causes of a failed practicum. They noted that extensive and careful planning was often neglected among teacher candidates who 'failed'. Furthermore, supervisors also felt that teacher candidates who 'failed' were unable to evaluate students fairly and to determine their needs and respond effectively to them. They were described as unable or unwilling to address students' socio-emotional or academic needs. Teacher candidates fell short due to a lack of respect for the lives and personalities of their students. Lastly, teacher candidates who 'failed' were described as either unable to create orderly classrooms that fostered learning or unable to engage students in the classroom. In short, they had "limited conceptions of curriculum and instructional matters" (Knowles, Skrobola, & Coolican, 1995, p. 169). However, the process of learning to teach is an iterative process (Buitink, 2009; Hollingsworth, 1989; Rorrison, 2010) and expectations of lesson quality should be different at the beginning compared to the end of the practicum. For teacher candidates in this category, this did not occur to the satisfaction of their supervisors.

2.4.2 Development of a Sense of Self as a Teacher as a Factor of Poor Performance.

The aspects described above defined (or were the symptom of) the teacher candidate failure, and when further investigated, this failure might also be explained by the teacher candidate having

nonexistent or inflexible philosophies or having underestimated the practice of teaching

(Knowles, Skrobola, & Coolican, 1995). In short, being unable or having insufficient time to

develop their sense of 'self as teacher.' Teachers' efficacy within classroom contexts has a

profound influence on the growth and development. Oxford (1997) poignantly describes the

problems this causes when challenges are met:

> Constructivism in its many shapes suggests that the individual filters, sorts, and
>
> interprets experience and thus constructs knowledge, but constructivists
>
> frequently fail to mention that the filtering, sorting, and interpreting process is
>
> strongly influenced by self-referent attitudes and beliefs. Moreover, research
>
> shows that self-referent judgments help determine the amount of effort a person
>
> will spend in knowledge construction, especially in the face of obstacles. (p. 59).

In addition, Schmidt and Knowles (1995) found that teacher candidates who failed the

practicum appeared to have fewer opportunities to explore, identify, and validate who they were

and who they hoped to become as a teacher. The teacher candidates in their study were

described as wanting to please everyone around them and submerging "who they wanted to be"

(p. 439) in the face of what they thought others wanted of them. Knoblauch and Hoy (2008) also

found that teacher candidate efficacy beliefs were influenced by the school setting

(rural/urban/etc.) as well as the perceived efficacy of the mentor teacher. One cannot be an

efficacious teacher if one does not believe they could be one. Mentors and faculty advisors have

been identified as important sources of efficacy support for beginning teachers (Borko &

Mayfield, 1995; Fives, Hammam, & Olivarez, 2007; Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008; Tang, 2003).

2.4.3 Key Contextual Factors as Factors of Poor Performance

Contextual factors are the conditions of the environment that exist that facilitate a successful practicum. They include aspects of the practicum experience that are out of the control of the teacher candidate. This general lack of concern over contextual factors of a practicum has made it difficult to find literature relating contexts to a difficult practicum. However, Smith and Bourke, (1992) have related context, workload, and "excessive stress [as getting] in the way of learning in Teacher Education" (Beck & Kosnik, 2002, p. 95). Key contextual factors include: inappropriate role models (Keogh, Dole, & Hudson, 2006; Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008;), misunderstanding institutional culture, mismatch of placement and preparation, and lack of confidence on the part of the teacher candidate (Knowles, Cole, & Presswood, 2008). Mismatch among the key players is also a factor; for example previous experiences of the teacher candidate, beliefs of the Teacher Education program, beliefs of the cooperating teacher, settings and styles of practicum school, and the needs of the each player (Sudzina & Knowles, 1993) are all issues for significant mismatch. In addition, Livingston and Borko (1989) found that the educative experience was affected by the number of courses and subject areas taught as well as the level at which teacher candidates are comfortable with the content area. They explained that planning for instruction was a time consuming process for novice teachers, and recommend that the practicum be planned well in advcance, and so that teacher candidates have sufficient time to familiarize themselves with the content and instructional materials prior to beginning the practicum. They also called for opportunities for the teacher candidate to repeat, revise, and elaborate on their existing knowledge structures by limiting the number of courses and subjects assigned to the teacher candidate in the practicum settnigs. Interestingly, Knowles, Skrobola, and Coolican (1995) found that mentor teachers seemed less concerned about contextual factors

and acknowledge that more research is necessary in this area as it may be more important than previously thought.

2.4.4 Past Performance and Personal Histories as Factors of Poor Performance.

Past performances and personal histories on the part of the teacher candidate includes a lack of willingness to ask for help, poor time management, mental/physical health problems, and previous difficulties in educational settings. Knowles, Skrobola, and Coolican (1995) noted that these factors were not generally emphasized by supervisors and speculated that it was perhaps either they did not have knowledge of the personal histories of teacher candidate or they were not attuned to looking into these areas when teacher candidates were in trouble. Ascertaining these issues of the part of mentors (school and university) or facilitating conversations among teacher candidates are important first steps in an early-warning system that might address some of these issues before they become major hurdles to the successful completion of the practice..

2.5 Reporting the Challenges Faced

The challenges teacher candidates face during the practicum are rarely reported or explored. There is currently a limited body of research that explores the challenges of a practicum; there is even less research that explores the circumstances of an unsuccessful practicum. Moreover, the perspective of the teacher candidate is rarely sought. Admittedly, this is a difficult topic to explore; it is possibly due to an unwillingness on the part of a teacher candidate to come forward as someone who has failed a practicum (as possibly encountered when soliciting participants in this particular study), concern over ethics having to do with public exposure of schools and

mentors, and/or negative self-efficacy beliefs (the belief that the failure was entirely their own fault). Schmidt and Knowles (1995) caution that teacher candidates often assume that "their inability to cope was somehow their own fault; they were reluctant to criticize the situation or others in it" (p. 21).

Further attention and research into aspects of the experiences of teacher candidates who failed is paramount. If Teacher Education is to be as meaningful as possible, efforts must be made to ensure that teacher candidates have the best possible chance at being well informed about, provided with opportunities to articulate, and supported in attempts to address those issues that are known to be common underlying causes of practicum failure. From an ethical standpoint, this is a process of providing 'due process' to those who find themselves in difficult situations and are deserving of the opportunity to address and deal with those difficulties within a timely fashion. This study aims to better understand and explore the challenges faced by those who have failed their initial practicum.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the challenges faced by teacher candidates during their practicum, from the perspective of those who had been asked to withdraw from or had failed their initial practicum and who successfully completed their repeat practicum. This chapter will describe the context of the study, introduce the participants, and detail the design of the study.

3.1 The Context of the Study

The Bachelor of Education program under study was located at a large Canadian university or a neighbouring university that both have a long-standing commitment to teacher education and both draw from the same population of practicum schools and mentor teachers. For purposes of confidentiality, this university will be referred to as University of Canada (UoC). The Bachelor of Education (BEd.) program is a 12-month after-degree program that offers specialization for secondary teaching, along with elementary and middle years options. To be eligible for entry to the BEd program, individuals must have completed a Bachelor's degree including relevant academic preparation. Applicants must also have volunteer or work experience in a group setting with children or youth, preferably at the age level they wish to teach. Teacher candidates are assigned to at least two mentors from a list of volunteers who have had a minimum of three years' teaching experience in schools. They are assigned based on grade level, subject, and location.

The Teacher Education program at UoC is a 12-month after-degree program. In the fall semester (September to December), secondary school teacher candidates complete 24 credits of

coursework focusing mostly on subject-specific methodology. In October, they participate in a 2-week school based orientation, also called a "short practicum". During the 2-week school based practicum, teacher candidates are expected to teach approximately 20% of their mentor's workload. In the winter semester (January to May), students spend the first three weeks in seminars/coursework focusing on social justice in the classroom. Then, the teachers in this study spent 13 weeks in their practicum school completing the extended (long) practicum. Teacher candidates are expected to teach at 80-100% of a full time load for a minimum of four weeks of the thirteen-week practicum. Immersion into teaching is recommended to be gradual (called a "phase-in") and the load increases as teacher candidates start to show proficiency. After an acclimatization period, the focus shifts to meeting the challenges of an increased teaching load and added responsibilities. Following successful completion of the extended practicum, from May to August, secondary school teacher candidates complete another 20 credits of coursework.

3.2 Design of the Study

3.2.1 Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective underlying this study is that knowledge is personally constructed, socially mediated, and inherently situated (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Garrison, 1995; Hennessy, 1993; Wertsch, 1991). As Clarke (1997) has noted, "each of these attributes and the contribution they make to our understanding of teaching and learning continue to be the subject of debate within the educational community" (page 21). Much has been written about the first two characteristics (von Glasersfeld, 1987; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). However, the third characteristic is particularly important in the context of this study:

Recent investigations of learning . . . challenge [the] separation of what is learned from

how it is learned and used. The activity in which knowledge is developed and deployed, it

is now argued, is not separable from or ancillary to learning and cognition. Nor is it neutral.

Situations might be said to co-produce knowledge through activity. Learning and cognition

. . . are fundamentally situated. (Brown et al., 1989, p. 32)

As such, these three principles of knowledge construction underlie and impact all aspects of this

project. Further, these principles form the basis of the social constructivist emphasis in the

program design that was outlined earlier.

3.2.2 Research Focus

This study was guided by the following question:

From the perspective of those who have been required to repeat a practicum, what can we

learn to help us better understand how, and in what ways, the practicum context (both

original and repeated) served or hindered the learning needs of the teacher candidate?

3.2.3 Participants

Prior to recruitment of participants for this study, consent to conduct the study was granted by

the University of British Columbia Behavioral Ethics Board. Once consent was granted, 81

teachers were invited via e-mail from the University of Canada Teacher Education Office (TEO)

to participate in an anonymous online survey of their experiences in needing to repeat their

practicum.[1] The survey was created with survey software hosted by Edudata Canada. Edudata

Canada is a secure research and software centre located in the Faculty of Education at UBC.

---

[1] I did not have access to the names of participants as the invitations were sent directly
from the UoC TEO on my behalf and to ensure confidentiality of the records within the TEO.

This centre uses Ministry of Education approved practices and adheres strictly to security and confidentiality policies set out by the BC provincial government. Of those invited to participate, 11 individuals completed the online survey and five initially volunteered to be interviewed. Finally, three individuals were willing to participate in an interview. Given the stress and trauma associated with a failed practicum experience, the opportunity to speak to three individuals was regarded as a successful response.

The invitation to participate and ultimate selection of participants for the study was purposive. The sampling criteria was:

(a) All participants were teacher candidates at the University of Canada (UoC) between the 2006/2007 and 2010/2011 school years;

(b) All participants withdrew during the long/extended practicum portion of their initial program; and

(c) All participants successfully completed a second/supplemental or repeat practicum. Consequently, participants in this study are also referred to as "teachers.

Individuals who volunteered to be interviewed were given a letter of initial contact for the study that outlined the purpose and procedures for the study and assured confidentiality for the participants. Prior to the first interview, the participants completed informed consent forms. My own experiences in having to repeat the practicum greatly assisted the construction of the interview questions.

3.2.4 Researcher's Perspective

In this study, I was the only researcher involved in collecting and analyzing the data. To recap, I was asked to withdraw from my own practicum in the spring of 2006. I re-entered the program in 2007 and successfully completed a repeat practicum in the spring of 2007. Since then, I have been employed as a teacher.

As a successful teacher who had an unsuccessful initial practicum, I have my own distinctive biases on the matter of a 'failed' practicum. I have tried to be attentive to this aspect by regularly sharing the developing themes with my thesis supervisor. This process has acted as an important check/balance as together we have worked and re-worked various elements of the analysis until the 'ladder of inference' from data to themes was both robust and defensible. An important element in this process was continual review and revision of the evolving themes with my research supervisor.

3.2.5 Introducing the Participants

In order to provide a thorough description of the context of the study, each of the three participants are introduced separately. Pseudonyms for the participants have been used to ensure confidentiality. Participants were also asked to also use pseudonyms for mentors, faculty, and practicum schools and only gender-neutral pronouns (they/them/their) have been used to describe the mentors and faculty involved.

"Andrea" holds a Bachelor of Arts degree and is currently working as a Secondary English teacher in Quebec. She was under the age of 30 at the time of the interview. Following her degree and prior to entering the teacher education program, she had been out of school for

several years and had worked as a coach and tutor. She had two sponsor teachers for her first practicum experience. Andrea opted to withdraw after three weeks of her extended practicum. She returned to complete a supplemental or repeat practicum two years later. During that time, she had obtained a part-time, minimum-wage job in a coffee shop where she noted that this experience was relevant to her re-entry into teaching because it reminded her of the importance of 'social markers' (Nettle & Dunbar, 1997) in relational contexts (e.g., it taught her how to "smile and nod").

"Victor" holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Physics. He is currently working as a secondary science, math, and physics teacher in British Columbia. He was under the age of 30 at the time of the interview. Prior to entering the teacher education program, Victor had been out of school for one year where he recounted working 'odd jobs' but having never found anything permanent or exciting. He had a personal interest in visual and performing arts (e.g., he was semi-professional highland dancer). He had three sponsor teachers for his first practicum experience; one of who became overwhelmed with the responsibilities and ceased his mentoring position half-way through the practicum. Victor was recommended to withdraw by his faculty associate at the very end of the 13-week extended practicum.

"Adam" holds a PhD in microbiology. He was born and raised in France. He was in his thirties when the interview took place. Prior to entering the teacher education program he had experiences as a private tutor from the age of 15 as well as experience as a university teaching assistant while he completed his graduate studies. He is currently working as a secondary science and biology French teacher in Alberta. He had one sponsor teacher for his first practicum

and withdrew six weeks into the 13-week extended practicum. He was unknowingly suffering

from liver failure during his practicum and underwent a liver transplant shortly after

withdrawing.

3.2.6 Data Collection

> Narrative is charged with meaning. It is a way to make sense of the experiences of others
> and inform our discourse (Leggo, 2008).

There were three data collection strategies used for this study: autobiographical writing, a

survey, and semi-structured interviews (Griffee, 2005).

Autobiographical Writing. In attempting to make sense of my own experiences, I reflected on

both my practicum experiences using the autobiography guidelines of Bullough and Pinnegar

(2001). I recalled to the best of my ability, the events and stories of my own practicum

experiences. Further, I reflected on my current practice as a school teacher and also utilized

current and past academic literature as reference points for what and how teachers 'learn to

teach. The resultant autobiographical writing was an attempt to document, as a fully as possible;

the key issues that arose in my own practicum and which I believed were central to

understanding my initial failure and subsequent success. Throughout the analysis, I draw on this

writing and include selected incidents, as appropriate.

Survey. Respondents to the online survey were given 27 options from which to identify factors

contributing to their withdrawal (respondents could choose more than one factor) (Beck &

Kosnik, 2002; Knowles, Cole, & Presswood, 2008).   These included contextual, personal, self-

efficacy, and instructional issues. They were also asked to identify one particular factor that they felt was the main contributor to their difficulties (Appendix A).

Interview. Study participants who were interviewed were given the option to be interviewed via email (written), phone, or face-to-face. Andrea chose a written interview since she did not live locally and felt she could better express herself and edit herself in a written form. Two written interviews were collected approximately three months apart. Victor chose a phone interview; he also did not live locally. Two interviews were collected and occurred approximately one year apart as a leave of absence interrupted the research. Both interviews were transcribed by the researcher and verified by Victor. Adam chose a face-to-face interview, it was transcribed by the researcher and verified by Adam. A follow-up written questionnaire occurred over email approximately one year later on account of the afore-mentioned leave of absence.

Initial interview questions were both open-ended and specifically based on individual responses from the online survey.   Interviewees were asked for clarification and elaboration of their responses as well as stories that demonstrated their perspectives.   They were asked questions such as: "Please tell me about your experiences in teacher education, what were your campus experiences, your short practicum and your long practicum experiences?", "What specific experiences led you to withdraw?" "In the online survey you chose 'X' as one of the factors leading to your withdrawal, could you elaborate on this?", "Could you please give me some examples of situations that demonstrate the kinds of problems you experienced", and "In what ways was your repeated practicum different from your first experience?". Follow-up interview questions included questions such as: "In the first interview, you briefly mentioned X, could you

elaborate on what you are saying?" and "In the first interview, you said you felt X, could you tell me a story that demonstrated a time when you had this feeling?"

3.2.7 Data Analysis

The constant comparative method described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was used to anaylze the results of this study and derive themes from each particpant and compare themes that emerged across participants. In this process, the researcher sorts, analyzes, and codes the information and makes constant comparisons of the data in order to allow a themes to emerge (Kolb, 2012). Constant comparative method is frequently used in explorative studies similar to the nature of this study.

In applying the principles of the constant comparative method to data analysis for the study, I began documenting my own story and by transcribing the interview data to develop a deep understanding of both my own and the participants experiences. Once this process was complete, I began analysis by identifying meaningful data relating to the research focus (unitizing). Data was then organized according to common elements (categorizing). In the final stage of coding, the categories were organized into core emergent themes. To qualify as a theme in this study, it had to be expressed/experienced by three of the four individuals in the study (three participants as well as the researcher).   The participant quotes used throughout this document are illustrative of key ideas related to each theme as it emerged during the analysis.

3.3 Establishing Validity and Reliability

In determining the extent to which researchers can rely on the findings of a qualitative study, the researcher must take certain precautionary measures to address concerns over validity and reliability (Kolb, 2012).

Internal validity addresses the accuracy of the data (Kolb, 2012). In this study, one survey and two interviews were held with each participant, which contributed to the collection of "rich" descriptions of the teacher candidate experience. Member checks with the participants involved revisiting the data previously collected by providing participants with transcripts of the interviews and asking them to verify the information they previously presented.

For this study, the researcher's perspective has been clearly stated regarding the theoretical orientation of the study. Also, every attempt has been made to articulate the researcher's own teacher candidate experience and the need to withdraw from a practicum. These views and perceptions are an integral aspect of the study and design.

In terms of case-to-case generalizability (Yin, 1994), the value of this study in terms of contributing to the literature was enhanced by utilizing both a thematic analysis of the three participants and my own experiences and by also maintaining a 'ladder of inference' (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Senge, 2008) from data to conclusions. For example, a constant tracking of the successive development of the themes was maintained by labeling quotes so that they could be easily located within the body of the full database at all times.

Finally, the practicum contexts of the study participants has been extensively outlined so that the reader is able to determine the commonalities of the current study to their own context.

3.2 Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study that may affect its application to other contexts. Firstly, the number of survey respondents (n=11) and interviewee respondents (n=3) are small. Secondly, all participants interviewed had completed their repeat practicum at least a year prior to being interviewed, so there was a time gap in recalling their memories of the first and repeated practicum, which means that they may not have been as accurate as they might have been if the interviews were held immediately earlier. Also, this study did not take into account the perceptions of teacher candidates who failed their practicum and chose not to continue the program or successfully repeat the practicum. The views of these people would provide an even broader and more detailed account of the 'failed practicum ' experience.

This study was conducted at one university on the West coast of Canada. There are other universities within close distance that offer teacher education programs in similar practicum settings as the participants in this study and the experiences of those in other settings may have been different.

It is important to also note that each of the three participants and I completed our practicum in a secondary school setting and we had all been out of school for at least one year prior to entering the teacher education program. The insights of teachers who work at the Elementary school level or teachers who had not had previous life experience outside of post-secondary school prior

to engaging in university study could be different (Fives, Hammam, & Olivarez, 2007) from those reported in this study.

While there are a number of limitations associated with any study of human experience (e.g., the Hawthorn Effect, trustworthiness, etc.), I would like to highlight one important limitation of the current study: the self-selected or voluntary nature on the participants. Given the trauma and distress associated with 'failure,' it was always going to be a challenge in soliciting participants for this study. This is one reason why I chose to interview those who had successfully repeated their practicum: this group's experiences were similar to my own and, I felt, they were more likely to step forward and share their experiences at having successfully navigated the B.Ed. experience, albeit somewhat delayed in comparison to their peers.

The significance of this 'selection' process is that the study cannot purport to have broadly captured the 'failed practicum' experience but only that of those who volunteered to share their experiences along with my own experiences. Therefore, the outcomes of the study must be viewed from this perspective.

Finally, I would like to note that I made every effort to ensure in the interviews I conducted that the participants were productive in terms of identifying key issues and possible strategies for informing and facilitating the practicum as a learning experience for all concerned. It was my intention, and I believe that I was successful, not to dwell solely on 'real' or 'felt' grievances arising from the failed practicum. Rather, I felt it best to acknowledge and then to move beyond

such feelings so that positive outcomes and processes might be identified that would benefit both students and supervisors involved in future practicums.

Chapter 4 – Results

Based on interview transcripts, my own experiences, and to a lesser extent the survey data, the perspectives of the four teachers' analyzed in this study (i.e., the factors that contributed to their withdrawal/failure) are outlined.   In describing the factors, I cite the teacher responses in order to give the finer nuances that may be lacking in the current research and that I sought to explore in this study.

Five emergent themes central to a 'failed practicum' are discussed in this chapter:

- Excessive workload,

- Inappropriate feedback;

- A poor relationship with mentors and/or faculty advisors;

- Role models who cannot demonstrate or communicate best practice; and

- Personal limitations.

4.1 Excessive Workload

Four out of eleven respondents to the online survey chose "role overload" as a contributing factor in their withdrawal. For the teachers interviewed, workload meant insufficient time to work out lesson plans prior to the beginning of the long practicum, insufficient time to revise lessons during the practicum, and too many mentor teachers to communicate with during their practicum.

4.1.1 Insufficient Time to Plan Lessons/Units Prior to Beginning the Extended Practicum

The participants felt that sufficient time to prepare in advance was not available. This

compromised their ability to properly meet the challenge of teaching in schools.

Adam described his first experience and having insufficient time to plan:

> [My mentor teacher] told me I would be teaching Science 9 but one week before I
>
> started, I learned it would be changed to Science 10 because it would be better for
>
> them. My mind was set on Science 9; it was hard to change that. When you are
>
> used to teaching, it's different. Especially because I didn't know what to teach
>
> exactly, it was about ecology, I was never taught ecology in my high school. It
>
> was far away from my expertise. Except knowing what chemicals can do on
>
> people or in nature, that was pretty much it. So I felt out of place. I heard: "you
>
> are unprepared" from the beginning. (Adam, Interview #1)

Victor explained that for his first experience, by the end of the short practicum, he knew which

units he had to teach for only one of the four courses he would eventually teach during his

practicum.   The other two sponsors asked him to get in touch closer to the time of the extended

practicum. With one week's notice, he managed to plan all the units for his practicum and detail

the first two lessons for each unit.   He commented: "Oh God, it was a busy week" (Victor,

Interview #2) and clearly indicated that the time allotted was insufficient to undertake the sort of

preparation that he would liked to have done for his classes.

This was also my own experience. I was given three weeks to prepare units/lessons for two of

the four courses I was to teach and did not find out the units for the other two courses until after I

arrived at the school to begin the long practicum. I was to begin teaching those courses after two weeks. Added to that, upon arrival, I learned that the lessons/units I had planned over the three weeks required significant revision because I had not been provided with a key resource that my supervisors indicated they wanted to be included in the lessons.

In each of these cases, the teacher candidates found themselves struggling to catch up before they even began teaching.

In my repeated practicum, I was given very specific units to plan for and was given six weeks to do so. I arrived at the school to begin my practicum with complete and detailed lessons and units for the entire practicum. While some revision was necessary, I was not scrambling to learn content during that practicum. As a result, I was able to focus on my practice as well as on meeting the learning needs of the students.

4.1.2 Insufficient Time to Revise Lessons During the Extended Practicum

The teacher candidates also felt that they did not have sufficient time to plan and revise future lessons during the extended practicum.   Andrea detailed the unrealistic expectations of her faculty advisor in her first practicum:

> All of this meant that I was spending many hours each evening—literally all the hours, in fact, where I was not eating or sleeping—revising lesson plans. Because I had to plan in detail a full week in advance, due to my Faculty Advisor's requirement, each time a lesson would not go as planned in practice (which was every lesson,) I would have to revise a whole week's worth of subsequent lessons and fax them in. (Andrea, Interview #1)

Victor also struggled with finding time to revise and plan lessons once his first practicum began. He experienced extremely long conferencing sessions, some continuing until at least 5:00pm with one of his sponsors (to be discussed later) and was asked, in the interview, what this meant for his lesson planning: "I was very short on time. It was often, most days, well, every second day after [I had taught] his class." (Interview # 1)

When the teacher candidates in this study were not given sufficient time to plan lessons prior to teaching, classroom management issues surfaced. Victor experienced some success in his first practicum working with one out of his three mentor teachers (to be discussed below). From this mentor, he experienced a high level of support with his lesson planning and he reflected in the interview: "Part of classroom management is built into how you plan the lesson, but part of it is just how you read and react to situations" (Interview # 2). The lack of time to plan and revise lessons may have created problems in the practicum that were indicative of a lack of understanding of the practice on the part of the teacher candidates, when possibly what they needed was more time to plan.

4.1.3 Multiple Mentor Teachers

Having multiple mentor teachers was also problematic and seemed to create unnecessary work for the teacher candidates in this study. Having more than one mentor required the teacher candidates to be responsible for communicating with and between both, creating more pre/post lesson conferencing and scheduling difficulties (which often were left up to the teacher candidate to organize) and caused conflicting or confusing feedback in the three cases in this study.

Multiple mentor teachers meant juggling time and making sense of feedback in what was already a high-stakes situation.

For example, I asked Andrea: Could you give me some examples/situations that demonstrate the problems you encountered in trying to respond to the suggestions of all three supervisors in your first practicum? She replied:

> I think it's easier to give you an example of a time that this strategy helped me in my successful practicum. There were many instances in which I received contradictory feedback from my two supervisors. The most obvious and easily recountable was when my Teacher Sponsor commented that I hadn't been giving "chapter questions" for the first few lessons of my novel unit, and strongly suggested that I do so. When my Faculty Advisor came in to observe me teaching, he saw my lesson plan and told me to never, ever give chapter questions. I agreed with each in turn, then ignored both and continued with what I was doing.

> In my first practicum, I would have wasted time in discussions with everyone concerned, and then probably tried to find some way to incorporate all the feedback into some new non-question chapter question hybrid technique.

> In both my practicums, part of my role was to be a go-between between all my supervisors, who had little to no direct contact with each other. I understand from talking to peers that this is standard practice, but it shouldn't be. (Andrea, Interview #1)

Andrea speaks to the issue of finding herself navigating the practicum on her own. She needed

to find ways to make sense of everything she was experiencing without the support that would

usually be expected for such a challenging task. Having multiple mentors, none of whom

seemed to take an interest in helping her navigate the overlapping and sometimes incongruent

ideas was not an easy task. Andrea had a similar second practicum experience but by then, she

had developed skills to navigate the conflicting feedback on her own. In the above quote, she

alludes to the idea of a practicum where all members of the team can (and do) openly and

regularly communicate with one another as being a more ideal and productive learning

environment for teacher candidates.

Victor also spoke at length about the problems of having multiple mentor teachers. He

commented:

> The real sad thing is it's almost like all of them treated me as though somebody
>
> else was going to be doing all the heavy lifting with me, and it wasn't until the
>
> midway point that the four of them actually sat down with me and I actually got
>
> all four of them in the same room and talked to them, and we actually had a really
>
> good conversation. They actually had time for me and I was able to ask good
>
> questions. (Victor, Interview #2)

I also experienced the problem of multiple mentor teachers in my first practicum. In my

experience, multiple mentors meant weekly (or more frequent) observations from both

school mentors as well as a weekly or biweekly observation from my faculty advisor. This

meant three or four formal post-lesson conferences, lasting upwards of one hour each, every week. Having two mentor teachers also meant that I was running from one end of the school to the other between classes and changing out of business casual clothing and into athletic clothing to teach either Science or Physical Education (on the suggestion of my Faculty Associate that 'it will seem more professional if I dress according to the subject area I am teaching'). It also created a problem of never having the same 'prep block' (a period off when a teacher can do preparation work) as either of my mentors, which meant that conferencing and questions could only occur before or after school. Like Andrea, my mentors did not have any direct contact with one another due to their separate locations within a very large school and due to their respective subject areas being quite distinct (Science and PE). It was like two solitudes culturally and socially isolated from each other between which I had to shuttle and make sense of on a daily basis. When burdened with what felt like conflicting feedback, I worried first about offending one mentor or the other, then about understanding what was being asked of me, and lastly about deciding whether the different suggestions were right for my teaching style and my students. I often ended up confused.

Conversely, in my repeated practicum, I was placed with only one mentor teacher (N.B.: in secondary settings, teacher candidates are usually assigned to two mentors even if they are 'double English' majors in which case they would have two English teacher mentors). While I had a similarly high number of subjects to teach compared to my first practicum, it occurred in only one classroom and I only underwent one formal observation each week by my mentor teacher (in combination with several informal conversations throughout the

week). In this setting, I was able to quickly understand their perspective on classroom instruction. It was a much simpler task to then understand what it was that they were asking of me and then decide whether or not I wanted to follow the advice based upon our discussions and my reflections. I sometimes wondered if this clarity was due to the fact that since I had taken on seventy-five percent of the teaching load, they could focus more on me than they needed to focus on their own lessons (as was the case with the multiple mentor context). I felt like they were more relaxed and willing to give me time than I did with the two mentors for my first practicum. This is also somewhat related to the following section of this paper: issues pertaining to feedback from mentors. Also, based on the above analysis relating "excessive workload" to contexts, multiple mentors means time taken away from that which could have been spent preparing for and reflecting on teaching.

4.2 Inappropriate Feedback

Interviewees gave considerable evidence for the importance of quality feedback for a successful practicum. Interviewees described poor feedback (encompassing invalid, not useful, and not collegial), lack of feedback, or excessive feedback as hindering their ability to learn and grow during their first practicum. The root causes of each of these are significant given that feedback is considered one of the primary functions of mentors (Clarke, Triggs, & Neilsen, 2014) then greater attention needs to be given to this issue in teacher education.

4.2.1 Poor Quality Feedback

In the interviews, participants provided considerable evidence highlighting poor quality feedback during their practicum experience. For example, Andrea described the type of feedback she

received from one of her sponsors as "micro-focused". She said he would often give feedback on the worksheets that she created from a graphic design point of view saying they needed more white space or a different font. To Andrea, this feedback seemed largely irrelevant to the greater needs she faced in learning how to teach.

Victor received feedback from one of his mentors that was "top-down"; he only received written feedback on what to change in his lesson plans so that they would be more like his mentor's lesson plans but his mentor did not discuss the changes or the reasons behind them:

> They would never have time for me in the school, but they would always have me
> send my lesson plans to them ahead of time and they would send them back with
> corrections. Things started to improve, partly as I was getting feedback, but also
> in terms of the fact I would be almost implementing the lesson he had described.
> (Victor, Interview #1)

Although he was receiving feedback from this mentor, it served only to have him reproduce his mentor's lessons and did little to have Victor explore and experiment with his own teaching style, re-affirming the status quo of the current teaching context (Phelan, 2001). While it is understandable that a mentor would like to see a teacher candidate succeed in teaching in a style similar to his own before allowing him to explore and experiment with other styles, Victor felt that any attempt to introduce even a small degree of his own teaching style was quickly dismissed.

In contrast to this particular mentor, Victor also described having experienced quality of feedback from one of his three mentors (despite also describing her as being "busy"). For Victor, the most significant factor of their feedback was encouraging his sense of efficacy as a teacher:

> It went really well, actually. That was the place where I had the most confidence and the most success and the most help from that sponsor teacher. Definitely her feedback was very concise, very clear, and she only ever fed me one thing to improve at a time. (Victor, Interview #1)

I remember sitting in the science teachers' office at recess during my own practicum, after one of the first lessons I taught. My sponsor teacher, who was quite small, stood over me clutching the carbon copies of the feedback forms. It was three pages full of handwriting. The other teachers in the department filtered into the room as she began to review her notes with me. I remember nothing else of this conversation but the fact that I felt they found no positive aspects to my lesson and that there were no suggestions made on how to go about fixing the long list of things they had found wrong with my teaching. I was overwhelmed. Also, the public humiliation (which my mentor seemed oblivious to at the time) did little to instill the confidence that I desperately needed as a beginning teacher.

In contrast, during my repeated practicum, my sponsor and I would look at the list of observation foci provided by the university and we would choose just one for each lesson. They would stick to that one focus and only briefly address general pedagogy if something else came up. For example, we once chose 'teacher movement' as a focus.

They mapped my movement throughout the lesson and we discussed the results. As it turned out, I had missed walking around one side of the classroom and we discussed the importance of making my way around the whole class throughout a lesson in order to see what the students are doing. In addition, the notion of 'proximity' was a very useful outcome of that discussion. Rather than the feedback being overwhelming as had been the case in my initial practicum, the focused feedback approach was critical to a more grounded developmental approach to improving my teaching practice in the repeat practicum.

4.2.2 Insufficient Time Given to Giving Feedback

All of the interviewees described one or more of their mentors did not have sufficient time to provide quality feedback. For example, Andrea said that both of her mentor teachers were very busy outside of the classroom—one with several extracurricular commitments at the school, as well as a young family at home, and the other seemed to suffer from undefined personal and professional sources of stress. Victor also described his mentor teachers as "busy".   One of his three mentors only worked every other day, so it was very hard to arrange any sort of conversation with them. The second mentor's child was very ill and every second that they could spare, they were out of the school with their family; so they didn't have time for Victor either. Victor thought perhaps they both hoped that the third mentor teacher would be there for him whenever he needed help:

> With my Physics 11 teacher, the recurring theme with that one is that I would
>
> send lessons to them by email and they would be send them back with
>
> corrections, but they wouldn't usually be sent back until late the night before. In
>
> fact, many times, I would already be in bed before the emails were sent, so I'd get

them the [following] morning and have to react to the changes [just prior to the

lesson] in order to teach that very lesson. (Victor, Interview # 1)

This mentor teacher eventually recognized his inability to mentor Victor gave up the role

halfway though the practicum.

Lastly, Adam had only one mentor teacher to work with but explained that they were often

absent (at least once a week). He explained that he would arrive at the school in the morning and

have questions for them but they would be missing. And, when things went wrong, they would

say to him: "You did not contact me." A possible explanation for the lack of contact outside

school hours between Adam and his mentor could include that he did not feel comfortable

intruding on their personal life or perhaps he was working late into the night to prepare lessons

and could not contact them at the time when the questions arose. Given his expressed heavy

workload, both are plausible explanations.

I also experienced a lack of time on the part of the mentors. My science mentor consistently left

the school immediately at the end of the day. I was often in a post-lesson conference with my PE

mentor or my faculty advisor, cleaning up after a lesson, or helping students when they left the

school at 3:15pm. As a result, there wasn't any time to ask for their help or input. I was invited

to call them at home, but didn't feel comfortable intruding on their personal life. Electronic mail

and text messaging was not given as an option for communication. They also had previously

committed to traveling to another country to help build a library for disadvantaged children; this

meant that they would be absent for the last 3 weeks of my extended practicum. This created

problems that were unique to my practicum: My two mentors felt that I should complete the

immersion requirements (8 weeks) before my science mentor left for the trip. This meant that I needed to enter full immersion starting from my second week in the school [2](when most others began immersion in the fourth or fifth week). Consequently, there was no gradual immersion or 'phase-in'. In addition, my P.E. mentor was absent for the first two weeks of my extended practicum due to unanticipated personal circumstances. They also had two small children at home and extracurricular commitments that took up a lot of their time. I could often count on finding the PE mentor in the school whenever I needed them, but also felt that their answers were hurried and that I was burdening them with my questions. So I limited my questions only to things that required immediate attention. I didn't realize, at the time, the cost to my practicum of these accommodations.

In contrast, Andrea described her mentor from her repeated practicum in distinctly different terms: "My teacher sponsor also made themselves very available to chat, debrief, and answer questions whenever I needed, for as long as I needed" (Interview #2). A key element in Andrea's description of her interaction with her mentor is her use of the qualifier: as long as I needed. She infers to having her own needs being met in the relationship, rather than the relationship being constrained by factors beyond her control (e.g., the work schedules of her mentors). She also describes the addition of more informal conversations about teaching and learning rather only have access to formal feedback (i.e., the official forms provided by the university that need to be completed at least once a week by each mentor). These 'corridor conversations' appeared to be as critical in terms of her learning as did the formally required

---

[2] I did not attend the "University of Canada" and the immersion requirement for my practicum was eight weeks rather than four. The remainder of my program was very similar to that of the other participants in this study.

feedback conferences on her lessons.

In addition, the interviewees in this study described a lack of feedback of lesson plans submitted prior to teaching those lessons. Andrea described being asked to fax her lessons to her faculty advisor a week in advance (this was a requirement for all the teacher candidates in Andrea's cohort) yet never having received any feedback on those plans. Victor recalled the first lesson he taught for his first practicum: his mentor teacher had disapproved of the lesson to the point of speaking at length about this but only after Victor had taught the lesson. It was clear to Victor that his mentor had not taken the time to look at the lesson plan before Victor taught the lesson, leaving Victor with a sense of helplessness in attempting to seek input prior to his lessons.

I also experienced the same issue when my science sponsor was preparing for their three-week trip towards the end of my practicum. I recall that they briefly flipped through the pages of my lessons plans and unit plan and then said "Looks fine." Upon return, they declared that they were surprised at how far I had gotten in the content and hadn't expected that I would have been finished the unit already; all despite the fact that they had approved the plans prior to leaving and I had followed the unit and lesson plans almost exactly as I had shared prior to their departure. Again, my mentor was displeased and I felt helpless even though I thought I had been doing everything that was right (submitting lessons for approval, teaching the lessons as planned, etc.). I wondered if this negative interaction could have been avoided, had my mentor taken care to review and respond more fully to my lesson and unit plans ahead of time.

4.2.3 Feedback that Occurred Too Often or Took Too Long

Ironically, the exact opposite to the feedback described above also proved to be problematic for

some teacher candidates: that is, feedback that occurred too often or took too long to share. They

believed this to have negatively affected their experience. Victor described one of his mentor

teachers who observed him in every class:

> You've got to understand, if you think I like to talk, this person loves to talk. I
>
> would be caught in this awkward situation every day after school because I had
>
> that last block of the day. I didn't want to be rude and leave, but I was trapped and
>
> we would literally talk from 3:05, which is when school ends; we'd talk all the
>
> way through to about 5:00. (Victor, Interview #1)

In my own practicum I also experienced an overwhelming number of observations from my PE

mentor. I was never left alone with one particular class, which occurred every other day. Each

lesson I taught with this class was followed by a formal observation and a post-lesson conference

lasting approximately an hour. This occurred after every lesson and in combination with weekly

formal observation from my other mentor teacher and my faculty advisor; I was participating in

three or four post-lesson conferences each week, half of which were very long and difficult to

fully apprehend 'in the moment' and this left me with little time to digest or reflect upon their

content before the next lesson and post-lesson conference came around.

Teacher candidates who experience so much feedback feel both overwhelmed with trying to

makes sense of and respond to the feedback, and ultimately have less time to do so.

4.3 Poor Relationship with Mentors and/or Faculty Advisors

Teacher candidates who withdrew from their practicum felt that mentor relationships (or lack

thereof) played a role in their withdrawal. Six out of eleven survey respondents chose "isolation

and lack of collegiality" as one of the key factors contributing to their withdrawal. And, when

asked to choose the one factor that contributed most to their withdrawal, 7 out of 11 respondents

described aspects relating to mentor teacher or faculty advisor relationships. The impact of

practicum relationships was expounded upon in the three of the in-depth interviews.

4.3.1 Not Being Seen as a Peer

Being seen as a peer or at least a junior colleague has been previously described as important to

teacher candidates (Beck & Kosnik, 2002). But as the teacher candidates in this study reveal,

this connection or understanding is not always present in the dynamics of the practicum

relationship. Victor described his time in the school during the short practicum of the program,

where he did no teaching whatsoever (contrary to university policy) and felt sidelined for most of

the practicum:

> I sat at the back of the classes and I sort of would participate minimally. I
>
> introduced myself, and all that, and would contribute with a comment here or
>
> there, but I was kind of designated to that peanut gallery kind of spot in the back
>
> of the classroom. (Victor, Interview #1)

He was designated as an observer and this status seemed to continue into his long practicum

where he was expected to watch every lesson with that particular mentor teacher (previously

discussed). Adam also explained that he was never left alone in the classroom for his first

practicum and described how it hindered his ability to be himself as a teacher. He also described

a particular event that contributed to the deterioration of the relationship and which left him with

no authority as a teacher in the classroom:

> I was teaching about Ecology, I'm used to presenting research and using
>
> PowerPoint a lot, and my mentor didn't like that. I was showing some pictures
>
> and one was of a pollution cloud they have in the summer in Greece. A student
>
> questioned my picture and said it was not right. I said that I found it on the
>
> Internet; the student said it was wrong. My SA (mentor teacher) interrupted to
>
> say, "No, he's right [referring to the student]. You're wrong. He's Greek
>
> [referring again to the student]. He knows what he's talking about," right in the
>
> middle of my lesson. If you want to break someone and leave them with no
>
> authority to the class, do that to them. My mentor did that two or three times
>
> during my practicum. (Adam, Interview #1)

And Andrea recalls: "I was 'on' all the time, like it was one long job interview which was, in

fact, how I felt about it". At no point did Andrea feel as though she was a colleague or

collaborator in the classroom.

In my experience, my science mentor, while giving me some space to experiment in the

classroom without her being present, made her presence quite known during evaluations. She

often interrupted with facts and corrections and frequently circulated around the classroom while the students were working, quietly issuing instructions and directing the students' work.

In all the above instances, the gap between the teacher candidate and mentor relationship was magnified by actions that ran counter to any attempt to develop a collegial interaction between the two parties. In all cases, the teacher candidates didn't feel that this was intentional but nonetheless the outcome was dispiriting, at best, and dismissive, at worst.

4.3.2 Lack of Support and Trust

All the interviewees also felt a lack of support and trust from their mentor teachers and/or faculty advisor. For example, Andrea remembers of her first practicum:

> I was struggling quite badly but not receiving the support I needed to work things
> out. I don't think my supervisors even knew that I was struggling—and I certainly
> didn't want to tell them, since any possibilities for my future employment depended
> on their recommendations. Once it became clear that I needed help, I might have
> made it through with some heavy hand-holding, but this was not offered. (Amanda,
> Interview #1)

As she reflected on this, she felt that her mentors probably sensed her challenges but did not intervene. Her inexperience and expectation that she should not 'ask for help' in the event that it might be seen as a weakness came at great cost: a failed practicum. What is the role of the mentor in these circumstances?

Similarly, "Zoe" wrote in the online survey: "[my mentor teacher] was going through a divorce at the time of my practicum, they were not approachable, therefore they were unable to offer me any support." Victor also felt a lack of support. He recalled the meeting at the mid-way point of his practicum. It was the first meeting where all three mentors were present along with his faculty advisor. The following excerpt summarizes his conversation with the four mentors:

> They said, "Yeah, we are seeing you really struggle." To which I said, "I am really struggling because I am not getting any help. Okay, if I am doing things wrong, you need to help me and you need to find an appropriate way to help me fix my mistake or improve. I am willing to learn, I am very hard working. I haven't stopped working my 'butt off' since I got here. You guys could make it a little easier on me. Then I think we'd see better results". (Victor, Interview #2)

In my experience, there was also a lack of support from both mentors, in part because we had not had an opportunity to build a relationship. I was plucked from the school at which I completed my 2-week practicum due to a mismatch of my teaching subject and where I had established a good relationship with my mentors in a relatively low-stress environment. I met my new mentors in my new school for the first time in mid-December (the extended practicum was to start in the second week of January. With the P.E. mentor, I had no further contact with them until I began my practicum; they could not provide me with information on the units I would be teaching as they did not yet have the gym schedule (a consequence of a large department needing to share gym space and equipment), so I had no communication with them until then. I was in touch with the science mentor once or twice before arriving for my practicum, but that does not a relationship make.

Early on, Victor lost trust for his faculty advisor. He described: "I had some of my biggest problems with them, actually." And recalled the following story which, although it is quite long, is pertinent to this study and to have edited or summarized it would have reduced the impact.

My faculty advisor was always on their phone, I'm assuming what was texting during class. It meant that the reports often missed out stuff [that happened in the lesson]. One notable example was, and this would drive me crazy, I had given an assignment to draw a diagram for my students, and I had specified that as part of the rubric they needed to include color to get an extra mark, to get a full 10 out of 10.

The criticism was that: if you're going to mark them on color, you need to provide them with colored pens or pencil crayons. That's perfectly valid.

The problem was somehow, in my faculty advisor sitting at the back of my class texting, they had missed the part of my lesson where I said, "All right, everyone, I have pens and pencil crayons up at the front. You need to come up and pick some colors out for your diagrams."

It was that kind of, and my faculty advisor really made a big stink about it, too, and I had to defend myself and say, "Well look, I actually did do that. How come you missed it?"

Actually the biggest problem was about a third of the way through practicum, I was sat in the staff room during my prep and I was working on my laptop, writing a lesson plan. You have to understand this is a really, really big staff room. It's really long, it has big windows all across one end of it, and so it can be a little glaring.

Midway through me sitting in the staff room, she came in and sat down at the staff table, and I guess my faculty advisor didn't notice that I was there? They started talking about me to some of the other staff that was present, staff that I didn't know. I can hear them speaking quite candidly, and they started to say some rather disparaging things about me.

My faculty advisor brought up the fact I had questioned them on the report about the colored pens and crayons, and they were complaining about how I had the gall to argue about it. I was so shocked that my faculty advisor was saying that about me when I was sitting right there, and they hadn't noticed that I was sitting right there.

I didn't have the guts to approach them, because in my mind I'm thinking, "Okay, yes, a faculty adviser is supposed to be on your side." They're supposed to be helping you through this process. At the same time, they are the one who gives me the pass or the fail, I don't want to get on any bad side, so I didn't want to approach them. (Victor, Interview #1)

Victor lost trust in his faculty advisor who was supposed to be there to support him. By the public comments to another teacher, the faculty advisor, according to Victor, showed a lack of belief in him as a teacher.

In contrast, my mentor for my repeated practicum showed complete trust in me even before developing a strong relationship (we met twice in December and I began the practicum in February), despite the fact that I had informed my mentor of my previous withdrawal, which might have made others more reticent to commit themselves to a new teacher candidate. This supportive attitude was first evident when I was asked me to teach my first lesson without my mentor in the room. I was both surprised and nervous that they would be as accommodating as this; I had not experienced that kind of trust. They didn't just abandon me. They explained that I was like a step-parent; the students needed to see me as the teacher early in the practicum and that it wouldn't happen with my mentor in the room. It was a huge relief to know that I was trusted, and it set the tone for our relationship for the remainder of the practicum.

For these teachers, the relationship with their mentor and faculty advisor determined the nature of their discussions about teaching and learning, the level at which the teacher candidate valued their feedback, and teacher candidate's efficacy as a teacher.

4.4 Role Models that Cannot Communicate and Demonstrate Best Practice

Participants who were interviewed also implied that one or more of their mentor teachers and/or faculty advisor were not good role models. Also, six out of eleven survey respondents listed "inappropriate role models" as one of the factors contributing to their withdrawal.

Andrea described one of her mentor teachers as disorganized and stressed out. At the climax of her difficulties, she described the response to her last lesson:

> [My mentor] took me aside after watching me teach a lesson with essentially no plan—I was too overwhelmed and frustrated at that point to create them any more—and told me they wanted to see the rest of my plans for the entire practicum by the end of the next day. It was obviously a moment of panic for them, and they later expressed regret at having done it, but for me it just crystallized the fact that things weren't working out. (Andrea, Interview #1)

Similarly, Victor recalled feeling frustrated with one of his mentors due to an inability to make things clear in terms of what the mentor wanted him to do. He also explained a level of growing confusion over being asked to teach his mentor some science concepts. He recounts:

> As an example, the mentor would ask, "I haven't been able to wrap my head around voltage, can you explain it to me?" At first I thought this is a test or something like that, but they genuinely wanted to know. I'd try and give some examples and stuff, and it wasn't until about halfway through the practicum that I found out that they taught ELL for 28 years and had only just switched to teaching science. Imagine my surprise when I find that out. It made total sense. My mentor taught science like an ELL teacher would, which I began to notice. There was a lot of fill-in-the-blank kind of stuff; there were a lot of word problems, which is fine. Even the approach, it was just very language heavy, like

the definition of the concept is more important than the concept itself. (Victor,

Interview #1)

While these strategies might be appropriate to many contexts, it did not serve Victor well in terms of modeling good science teaching.

My own experience mirrored those of Andrea and Victor. My frustration with one of my mentor was twofold. Firstly, This mentor teacher was very disorganized; the desk was piled with papers with no room to spare. While disorganization in and of itself is not indicative of poor teaching and mentoring practices, as I searched to find my way and organize myself in a practicum that left me with little spare time, I had no model to follow.   Also, on many occasions I was uncomfortable with the ways I observed my mentor interact with students and manage the classroom. This, one day, also extended beyond the classroom when I watched my mentor single out a student in the hallway in front of her peers to discuss the student's attendance and effort in class, I felt this was inappropriate and did not want to emulate this behaviour. On another occasion, in discussion with me about how to handle a student who was consistently late, this same mentor recommended that when the student arrived late I should move her desk to the corner to show the student that she would be penalized by not being allowed to be an active member of the class. Again, I felt uncomfortable at this suggestion. Once more, I witnessed my mentor surprised, just days before a provincial exam, in realizing that an entire learning outcome had been forgotten and that it was an important part of the exam. These incidents seemed to be at odds with what we had learned about professional practice at the university and that are clearly articulated in the teachers' code of ethics.

4.5 Recognizing Their Own Limitations: Teacher Candidates as Beginning Teachers

The teacher candidates who were interviewed, as well as some of those who responded to the online survey, did not lay all the blame for their difficulties entirely upon the contexts of their practicum. They acknowledged their own shortcomings. Three out of the eleven survey respondents listed physical or mental health issues as a significant contributor to their difficulties during their practicum. Andrew described in the interview: "I don't want to put all the blame on [my mentor teacher], I was getting sick and I didn't know it. I was making mistakes" (Interview #1). Two months after he withdrew, Andrew learned that his liver was failing and soon after, he received a liver transplant. However, he expressed that he wished that his mentor teacher had been more sensitive to his struggling mental and physical state.

In addition to health issues, some teacher candidates recognized that they did not arrive at their practicum with the necessary understandings of teaching and learning. Victor recounted the few weeks spent in coursework immediately prior to beginning his extended practicum where he continued to have an unrealistic expectation of the practicum experience:

> Right up until basically I started the practicum, I was still in "la-la land". I
> thought this was great. I was completely clueless; it's kind of embarrassing,
> thinking back on how little I was concerned about my practicum. It wasn't even
> on my radar. I was just thinking, "Okay, we'll enjoy the classes while we can."
> (Victor, Interview #1)

When Victor reflected on the first lesson he taught, a lack of understanding what good teaching is clearly:

I mean really, just to show the depth of my cluelessness as to what it means to be a teacher and to have a lesson where I engage the students and they are actually participating. I literally talked at them for an hour and twenty minutes. (Victor, Interview #1)

Andrea also described her limitations as a beginning teacher:

My background [as a coach and tutor] was evident in the ineffectuality of my lesson plans, which were very effective at engaging students' interest but not very effective at conveying information about English Literature. This lead to major problems with my ability to assess students' learning. I did things like effectively addressing multiple intelligences and learning styles in my lesson designs, while failing to account for the fact that some students would be away during group projects, or that they might not possess age-appropriate reading or writing skills. (Andrea, Interview #1)

Even though the teacher candidates revealed and recognized their shortcomings in instructional and personal matters that impacted their ability to successfully complete the practicum, they still felt that many of the other dimensions related to their practicum and described earlier were out of their control and, might have been mitigated if attended to, by their mentors.

CHAPTER 5 – Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to gain insights into the experiences and perceptions of teacher

candidates' who failed practicum, and who later successfully repeated their practicum. Data

analysis using constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) led to the determination of

four main themes relating to practicum failure. The discussion, conclusions, and implications

that appear in this chapter are drawn from the analysis of the data of the participants in this

study. To recap, this study was guided by the research question:

> *From the perspective of those who have been required to repeat a practicum, what can we*
>
> *learn to help us better understand how and in what ways the practicum context (both*
>
> *original and repeated) served or hindered the learning needs of the teacher candidate?*

5.1 Findings Related to Common Themes and Linked to Literature Review

All participants agreed that they had problems with planning, preparation, and/or classroom

management that led to their failed practicum. All participants in this study also felt that

particular contextual factors in their experiences made 'learning to teach' more difficult than it

might otherwise have been (regardless of whether failure was the ultimate outcome). As

previously described, perhaps these problems were symptoms of larger issues (e.g., the seeming

lack of professional development for mentors at play in practicum settings). None of these

factors singularly explain failure, but collectively, they provide a picture of teacher candidate

failure that goes beyond their own personal histories and practice as beginning teachers. This

paper confirms the existing attributions of failure in literature and confirms the suspicions of

Knoblauch and Hoy (2008) that there is a connection between contextual factors, mentor

teachers, and teacher candidate sense of self-efficacy, all of which are critical to practicum success for teacher candidates.

Time is a necessary component of inquiry and reflection and the teacher candidates in this study described a lack of time on the part of both themselves and their mentors as a key factor hindering their ability to think about and critically evaluate their practice in an on-going and developmental fashion. This paper confirms that an unreasonable workload creates added stress to this already challenging component (Fives, Hammam, & Olivarez, 2007; Smith & Bourke, 1992).

Sudzina and Knowles (1993) noted that insufficient preparation of lessons and units by teacher candidates in advance of the practicum led to serious breakdowns in classroom management during the practicum. The experiences of the participants in this study confirm and extend this claim. UoC recommends that by the end of the two-week school-based orientation (short practicum), mentors and teacher candidates should begin what will be a continuing dialogue about the units, themes, and topics for which the teacher candidate will be responsible during the Extended Practicum in January to April. Three out of the four participants in this study noted that this kind of advance notice was absent in their practicum individual contexts. This raises serious questions about pre-practicum preparation, the role of mentors in that preparation, and the role of the teacher education program to communicate and ensure their guidelines are adhered to.

The University of Canada publishes information for mentor teachers on their blog; other universities provide different strategies for informing mentor teachers. Seemingly however,

these communication strategies may not be as successful or as educative as the universities hope. Based on the stories recounted in this paper, one might be forgiven for thinking that such prompts serve more as decorations than directions for ensuring quality mentoring in practicum settings. In the case of the two interviewees who reported workload issues, the practicum expectations for mentors weren't adhered to. In my own case, when I expressed concern to my faculty advisor over my workload, I hoped that they would advocate for a reduction on my behalf but this did not occur. I was left with what was, for me, an unsustainable workload.

Teacher candidates have a huge burden of responsibility when they plan for their long practicum. Although it is hoped that they are teaching in their subject areas, teacher candidates find also that they are expected to become familiar with prescribed learning outcomes in other areas, that they need to re-learn some content material to an expert level in a relatively short timeframe, be able to anticipate students' prior knowledge, plan for classroom management in circumstances that they have had little or no preparation for, develop scope and sequence plans for several units, create new lesson materials from scratch, and demonstrate the latest 'active learning' strategies in their classrooms. This is a time consuming and almost impossible set of expectations (Livingston & Borko, 1989). However, if these are the expectations for teacher candidates, then it is essential that they be given sufficient time to address these matters within the context of the practicum setting (e.g., a reasonable workload especially at the start of the practicum). While it is likely that lessons and units will need to be revised as the practicum unfolds, greater consideration, particularly around these sorts of expectations needs to be given for candidates to successfully navigate the demands of the practicum.

Being seen as a peer by the mentor is important in building relationships and establishing a sense

of trust (Beck & Kosnik, 2002); it is important to the collaborative aspect of teaching. However,

I believe this, on its own, is insufficient. It is crucial that the mentor teacher views the teacher

candidate as a peer with regards to collaboration and trust, but that they also treat them as

students/learners with the aim to support their emotional and intellectual needs. An

understanding of the process of 'learning to teach' is crucial; in particular, teacher candidates

cannot be expected to develop and demonstrate a range of skills and abilities all at once but

rather practice and develop these incrementally throughout the practicum. Andrea described her

lesson planning process: "I felt enormous pressure (both from two of my supervisors and from

the UoC Bachelor of Education program in general) to create polished and flashy teaching

materials from scratch for every lesson, which I did not feel at all in my second one."

Hollingsworth (1989) argues that learning is improved if teachers are not expected to think about

all aspects of teaching at once; general managerial routines need to be in place before content

and pedagogy can be a focus. Buitink (2009) extends this idea to say that teacher candidates

initially focus on themselves, than what a pupil can learn, and lastly they focus on pupils'

learning processes. Perhaps a middle ground can be reached wherein teacher candidates are

regarded as peers for collaborating and building trust, yet treated as students who need their

emotional and intellectual needs protected. Simple but structured approaches such as these could

have helped the four teacher candidates in this study as they struggled to come to grips with

'learning to teach.' The role that a mentor plays in addressing such issues cannot be understated.

Participants identified having multiple mentor teachers as a factor in creating more work for

them and, ultimately contributing to their withdrawal from the practicum. Having multiple

mentors in teacher education is common practice. The benefits of having multiple mentors could include exposure to different perspectives as well as higher likelihood that a mentor is available to help. However, Baugh and Scandura (1999) found that role conflict increases with the number of mentors. Participants in this study felt that their mentor teachers did not communicate with one another, gave conflicting feedback, or underestimated the level at which they were expected to participate in the triad. While having two mentor teachers (and sometime more) is common practice, in the case of the individuals in this study, multiple mentors added to the difficulties they experienced in their failed practicums. The multiple mentor scenario as a contributing factor in a failed practicum is an unexplored phenomenon and is worthy of further investigation.

Almost without exception, mentor teachers and faculty advisors in the failed practicum settings described in this study were seen by the teacher candidates as having little to no knowledge on how to appropriately mentor teacher candidates. In short, the teacher candidates, while recognizing their own shortcomings felt that their mentors were not able to provide an environment conducive to learning within the context of the practicum setting.

The importance of the findings of this study relating the nature of feedback as a contributing factor in failing a practicum cannot be understated. The quality feedback was not provided as a possible option in the original online survey given to the teacher candidates, as it did not appear to be of significance in terms of practicum failure in the body of literature used to construct the survey. Yet, the participants gave considerable evidence for the link between poor feedback and their failed practicum. This study confirms the findings of Knoblauch and Hoy (2008) who

found that verbal encouragement from mentors was an important source of efficacy for teacher candidates; it was an important factor in allowing the teacher candidate to regard themselves as teachers. Beck and Kosnik (2002) also identified feedback as being important to teacher candidates. But not just any feedback, it needs to be valid, useful, collegial in spirit, not "top-down", specific in content, and sensible in quantity. The results of this study suggest that feedback is a key factor in a failed practicum.

This study has provided examples of how teacher candidates' relationships with their mentor or faculty can hinder or enhance their success. It supports the findings of Tang (2003), who found that teacher candidates can have unproductive learning experiences when in an isolated socio-professional context. The failure to negotiate positive relationships in professional learning contexts leads to feelings of isolation, rejection, and in the case of the participants in this study, failure. Productive learning is less likely to occur in psychologically unsafe or unsupportive environments. My mentor (who had missed the last three weeks of my practicum) chastized me for being further ahead than they had anticipated even though they had seen my plans before they left. I considered that perhaps they had wanted to avoid the difficult (Borko & Mayfield, 1995) conversation of 'judging' my lesson plans or perhaps they wanted to give me the space to experience and determine the supposed ineffectuality of my unit plan on my own . However, they were not present to observe the execution of those lessons and as such, their reaction only served to further isolate and reject me.

Further, role models who are generally disorganized are hard to follow or understand, and perhaps should not be emulated by teacher candidates. Keogh, Dole, and Hudson (2006) wrote

of their study: "[o]ne of the most alarming aspects of this study was the fact that it became evident that some of the practicing teachers performing the assessments could not demonstrate the required attributes to a sufficient degree to that required by the teacher candidates" (p. 12). This study also supports the findings of Tang (2003) who found that teacher candidates who viewed the mentor as efficacious, felt more efficacious themselves. During his failed practicum, Victor experienced the most success with the mentor who he viewed as the most organized of the three. This issue speaks to key aspects of professionalism as important in assuming the role of a mentor.

Much of the practicum decisions (who, where, how, and how much) are out of the teacher candidate's hands, yet somehow we only discuss the failed or difficult practicum in terms of what the teacher candidate could not accomplish (Knowles, Cole, & Presswood, 2008). The four themes presented in this paper (workload, relationships, feedback, and role models), although distinct, are not unrelated. These all have the potential to negatively affect how the mentor(s) and teacher candidate work together and perceive one another. When workload is too high, for example, a teacher candidate may not be able to demonstrate the skills and knowledge they are expected to develop and the relationships may become strained as the mentor labors with helping the struggling teacher candidate who is labeled "unprepared", "disorganized", and "lacking pedagogical knowledge". Additionally, the relationships between the mentor(s) and teacher candidate might be compromised if the quality of feedback given is less that might be required in the circumstance. As the teacher candidate attempts to make sense of a challenging situation, they must navigate, filter, and apply the feedback. Should the feedback be considered ineffective by way of quality, quantity, or perceived usefulness, the teacher candidate may be left with the

feeling of a lack of trust and/or respect for or from the mentor(s). The nature of the practicum workload, feedback, relationships, and perception of their role models become intertwined as the mentor(s) and teacher candidate negotiate their relationship.

5.2 Extending This Study

As previously discussed, one of the limitations of this study was the relatively small sample size. A larger scale survey and interview process including more participants, more universities, and/or teacher candidates who chose not to repeat their practicum could help provide greater nuance to the results of this study and their applicability to similar contexts.

Other issues that were touched upon but were not fully discussed by the participants or investigated by the interviewer include: variety of subjects taught (number of courses to prepare for), subjects which were outside of the teacher candidate's specialty area, students who had previous life/career experiences prior to entering the Teacher Education program, and an inflexible set of rules on the part of the mentor teacher or faculty advisor. These areas could be explored in the future to extend what has been learned in this study.

5.3 Conclusion and Implications (Answering the guiding research question)

The practicum is a highly complex experience and there is no way to possibly ensure 100% success. However, there are certain critical issues that could and should be attended to by the teacher education program when organizing, facilitating, and evaluating practica. Teachers in this study outlined the challenges they faced in their practicum and described how those challenges hindered their success. They also described instances where they experienced a

degree of success. Many of the challenges encountered by the participants in this study are consistent with the small body of literature on 'failed practicum' experiences and indicate a need, in current contexts, to re-think, revise, or at the very least revisit teacher education practices. In concluding this paper, I offer some issues that I believe should be attended to and would ultimately facilitate the provision of optimum learning environments for teacher candidates on practicum consistent with a social constructivist approach to learning.

Two of the three interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with the preparation they received from their campus experiences. However, under the current model, changes to coursework may have done little to change the outcomes of their practica. The participants in this study described feeling overwhelmed by their workload, feeling isolated from their mentor and/or faculty advisor, and received ineffective feedback. Campus coursework and experiences tell/show teacher candidates how they are expected to teach. Teacher candidates enter the practicum experience with the sometimes a hands-off (Borko & Mayfield, 1995) approach from their mentor(s) and faculty. The short time frame of the extended practicum in the teacher education program in this study requires the teacher candidate to quickly demonstrate a range of skills they were only told/shown how to do. They are expected to get on the teaching bicycle, balance, and pedal all at once when they have only been told how to ride. Instead, the support needs to be high in the beginning and gradually taper off as the teacher candidate begins to gain the coordination necessary to ride that bike. This takes time. The findings of this study support those of several authors (Dewey J. , 1903-1906; Hastings & Squires, 2002; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Buzza, Kotsopoulos, & Mueller, 2010) who have argued for a more integrated approach to pre-service teacher education programs.

This study confirms and extends the need for better teaching, assessment, and/or monitoring of mentoring practices. The important role that a mentor teacher (and/or faculty advisor) plays in the success of a teacher candidate cannot be understated (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Clarke, Triggs, & Neilsen, 2014; Glickman & Bey, 1990; Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008). Participants in this study repeatedly described contexts relating to their mentor as factors contributing to their failure. It may seem that the finger of blame is being pointed at the mentors when what the outcome of my study is really suggesting is the need for a better understanding of mentorship. We somehow understate the important role of mentors by failing to fully attend to what it means to be a mentor and the skills and abilities required for that role

This study calls for the need for a clear set of expectations/policies/procedures regarding workload and lesson planning in practicum settings. All parties should be familiar with and follow through with the expectations. Aspects to consider include but are not limited to: number of subjects, number of mentors, number of classrooms, advance notice of topics that will be taught, and the quality of feedback. The faculty advisor could have a significant role as the university-school liaison responsible for making expectations explicit and advocating for the level of workload and realistic expectations for the teacher candidate as a learner rather than as a workplace-ready professional. Again, although this paper does not examine the role of the faculty advisor, the inter-relationship between school and university mentors is deserving of closer attention.

This study has revealed and confirmed important findings regarding the importance of paying attention to context, but more research is necessary to better understand the connection between contextual factors and teacher candidate failure. Much resides on successful teacher education programs being a co-construction between schools and universities and this is not going to occur without deliberate attention to achieving that goal. The idea of context has implications for design of the program, how beginning teachers are mentored (Buitink, 2009) and, supports the small but growing body of literature in this area. It is hoped that this study adds to that literature and continues that momentum.

References

Argyris, C., & Schon, D. (1996). *Organizational Learning II: Theory, method, and practice.* Reading, Mass: Addison Wesley.

Bariteau, D., & Clarke, A. (2006). Lack of Feedback to cooperating teachers: Sanctioned pratice or professional neglect? .

Baugh, S. G., & Scandura, T. A. (1999). The effect of multiple mentors on protege attitudes toward work setting. *Journal of Social Behaviour and Personality* , 503-521.

Beck, C., & Kosnik, C. (2002). Components of a Good Practicum. *Teacher Education Quarterly , 29* (2), 81-99.

Beck, C., & Kosnik, C. (2006). *Innovations in teacher education: A social constructivist approach.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Borko, H., & Mayfield, V. (1995). The roles of the cooperating teacher and university supervisor in learning to teach. *Teaching and Teacher Education , 11* (5), 501-518.

Boylorn, R. (2008). Participants as co-researchers. In L. M. Given, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (pp. 599-601). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Brown, J. S., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher , 18* (1), 32-42.

Brown, J. S., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher , 18* (1), 32-42.

Buitink, J. (2009). What and how do student teachers learn during school-based teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education , 25*, 118-127.

Bullough, R. V., & Pinnegar, S. (2001). Guidelines for Quality in Autobiographical Forms of Self-Study Research. *Educational Researcher , 30* (13), 13-21.

Buzza, D., Kotsopoulos, D., & Mueller, J. (2010). Investigating a professional development school model of teacher education in Canada. *McGill Journal of Education , 45* (1), 45-62.

Chalies, S., Escalie, G., Bertone, S., & Clarke, A. (2012). Learning 'rules' of practice within the context of the practicum triad: A case study of learning to teach. *Canadian Journal of Education , 35* (2), 3-23.

Clarke, A. (1997). A coaching praciticum for school advisors. *Teaching Education , 9* (1), 69.

Clarke, A. (2015). Myths and Realities of Mentoring. *Presentation at the Third International Conference on Teacher Education. National Taiwan Normal University.* Taipei, Taiwan.

Clarke, A., Triggs, V., & Neilsen, W. S. (2014). Cooperating Teacher Participation in Teacher Education. *Review of Educational Research , 84* (2), 163-202.

Claxton, G. (1996). Integrating learning theory and the learning teacher. In G. Claxton, T. Atkinson, M. Osborn, & M. Wallace (Eds.), *Liberating the learner: Lessons for professional development in education* (pp. 3-15). New York, USA: Routledge.

Cole, A. L., & Knowles, J. G. (1995). University supervisors and preservice teachers: clarifying roles and negotiating relationships. *The Teacher Educator , 30* (3), 44-56.

Dewey. (1902/1956). *The child and the curriculum.* Chicago, Il: The University of Chicago Press.

Dewey, J. (1903-1906). Essays on the New Empricism. In J. A. Boydston (Ed.), *John Dewey: The middle works* (Vol. 3, pp. 3-14). Car-bondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Dewey, J. (1902/1956). *The child and the curriculum.* Chicago, Il: Chicago Press.

Driver, R., & Scott, P. (1995). Mind in communication: A response to Erick Smith. *Educational Researcher , 24* (7), 27-29.

Fives, H., Hammam, D., & Olivarez, A. (2007). Does burnout begin with student teaching? Analyzing efficacy, burnout, and support during the student-teaching semester. *Teaching and Teacher Education , 23*, 916-934.

Garrison, J. (1995). Deweyan pragmatism and the epistemology of contemporary social constructivism. *American Educational Research Journal , 32*, 716-740.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* White Plains, NY: Longman.

Glickman, G., & Bey, T. (1990). Supervision. In R. (. Houston, *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 549-566). New York: MacMillan.

Griffee, D. (2005). Research Tips: Interview Data Collection. *Journal of Developmental Education , 28* (3), 36-37.

Haigh, M., & Ward, G. (2004). Problematising practicum relationships: Questioning the "taken for granted". *Australian Journal of Education , 48*, 134-148.

Hastings, W. (2010). Expectations of a pre-service teacher: implications of encountering the unexpected. *Asia-Pacific Journal of teacher education , 38* (3), 207-219.

Hastings, W., & Squires, D. (2002). Restructuring and reculturing: Practicum supervision as professional development for teachers. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacer Education , 20*, 79-91.

Hennessy, S. (1993). Situated cognition and cognitive apprenticeship: Implications for classroom learning. *Studies in Science Education , 22* (2), 1-41.

Hollingsworth, S. (1989). Prior beliefs and cognitive change in learning to teach. *American Educational Research journal , 26* (2), 160-189.

Janzen, M. (2015). Free yourself, sister!: teacher identity, subjection, and the psyche. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education , 43* (2), 117-127.

Kagan, D. M. (1992). Professional Growth Among Preservice and Beginning Teachers. *Review of Educational Research , 62* (2), 129-169.

Kennedy, J. (2006). A study of learning enviornment in the extended practicum of a pre-service teacher education course at a catholic university. (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis). Banyo, QLD: Australian Catholic University.

Keogh, J., Dole, S., & Hudson, E. (2006). Supervisor or mentor? Questionning the quality of pre-service teacher practicum experiences. *AARE International Education Conferencce 2006* (pp. 1-15). Adelaide, SA: AARE.

Klein, M. (2001). Constructivist practice, pre-service teacher education and change: the limitations of appealing to hearts and minds. *Teachers and Teaching; theory and practice , 7* (3), 257-269.

Knoblauch, D., & Hoy, A. W. (2008). "Maybe I can teach those kids." The influence of contextual factors on student teachers' efficacy beliefs. *Teaching and Teacher Education , 24*, 166-179.

Knowles, G. J., & Cole, A. L. (1996). Developing practice through field experience. In F. B. Murray, *The teacher educator's handbook: Building a knowledge base for the preparation of teachers* (p. xv). San Fransisco, California: Jossey-Bass.

Knowles, J. G., & Hoefler, V. B. (1989). The student teacher who wouldn't go away: Learning form failure. *Journal of Experiential Education* (Summer), 14-21.

Knowles, J. G., & Holt-Reynolds, D. (1991). Shaping pedagogies through personal histories in preservice teacher education. *Teachers College Record , 93* (1), 87-113.

Knowles, J. G., & Holt-Reynolds, D. (1991). Shaping pedagogies through personal histories in preservice teacher education. *Teachers College Record , 93* (1), 87-113.

Knowles, J. G., Cole, A. L., & Presswood, C. S. (2008). *Through preservice teachers' eyes: Exploring field experiences through narrative and inquiry.* Halifax, NS: Backalong Books.

Knowles, J. G., Skrobola, N. L., & Coolican, M. J. (1995). We Watched Them "Fail": University Supervisors' Perceptions of "Failure" in Student Teaching. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education , 8* (2), 151-172.

Kolb, S. M. (2012). Grounded Theory and the Constant Comparative Method: Valid research and strategies for educators. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research , 3* (1), 83-86.

Leggo, C. (2008). Narrative Inquiry: Attending to the art of discourse. *Language and Literacy , 10* (1), 1-21.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills: Sage.

Livingston, C., & Borko, H. (1989). Expert-Novice differences in teaching: a cognitive analysis and implications for teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education , 40* (4), 36-42.

Loizou, E. (2011). The diverse facets of power in early childhood mentor-student teacher relationships. *European journal of teacher education , 34* (4), 373-386.

Margolis, J. (2007). Improving relationships between mentor teachers and student teachers: engaging in a pedagogy of explicitness. *The new educator , 3*, 75-94.

Mimbs-Johnson, C. (2009). *Kappa Omicron Nu FORUM.* Retrieved December 17, 2015, from Student Teaching: A constructivist context: http://www.kon.org/archives/forum/18-2/mimbs-johnson.html

Nettle, D., & Dunbar, R. I. (1997). Social Markers and the Evolution of Reciprocal Exchange. *Current Anthropology , 38* (1), 93-99.

Nettle, E. B. (1998). Stability and change in the beliefs of student teachers during practice teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education , 14* (2), 193-204.

Noel, K. (2000). 'Experiencing the Theory': constructivism in a pre-service teacher preparation program. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice , 6* (2), 183-196.

Oxford. (1997). Constructivism: shape-shifting, substance, and teacher education. *Peabody Journal of Education , 72* (1), 35-66.

Phelan, A. M. (2001). Power and place in teaching and teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education , 17*, 583-597.

Piaget, J., & Inhelder, B. (1962). *The Psychology of the child.* New York: Basic Books.

Posner, G. J., Strike, K. A., Hewson, P. W., & Gertzog, W. A. (1982). Accomodation of a scientific conception: Toward a theory of conceptual change. *Science Education , 66*, 211-227.

Rorrison, D. (2010). Assessment of the practicum in teacher education: advocating for the student teacher and questionning the gatekeepers. *Educational Studies , 36* (5), 505-519.

Sanders, M., Dowson, M., & Sinclair, C. (2005). What do associate teachers do anyway? A comparison of theoretical conceptualisations in the literature and observed practice on the filed. *Teacher's College Record , 107*, 706-738.

Schmidt, M., & Knowles, J. (1995). Four Women's Stories of "Failure" as Beginning Teachers. *Teaching & Teacher Education , 11* (5), 429-444.

Senge, P. e. (2008). *The Necessary Revolution. How individuals and organizations are working together to create a sustainable world.* New York: Doubleday.

Smith, M., & Bourke, S. (1992). Teacher Stress: examining a model based on context, workload, and satisfaction. *Teaching and Teacher Education , 8* (1), 31-46.

Sudzina, M. R., & Knowles, J. G. (1993). Personal, professional, and contextual circumstances of student teachers who "fail": setting a course for understanding failure in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education , 44* (4), 254-262.

Sudzina, M., Giebelhaus, C., & Coolican, M. (1997). Mentor or tormentor: the role of the cooperating teacher in student teacher success of failure. *Action in Teacher Education , XVIII* (4), 23-35.

Tang, S. Y. (2003). Challenge and support: the dynamics of student teachers' professional learning in the field experience. *Teaching and Teacher Education , 19*, 483-498.

University of British Columbia. (n.d). *University of British Columbia*. Retrieved June 4, 2015, from Faculty of Education: http://teach.educ.ubc.ca/bachelor-of-education-program/

von Glasersfeld, E. (1987). Learning as a constructive activity. In C. Janvier, *Problems of representation in the teaching and learning of mathematics* (pp. 3-17). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Vygotsky. (1962). *Thought and Language.* Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes.* MA: Harvard University Press.

Wang, F., & Clarke, A. (In Press). Empty Success or Brilliant Failure: an Analysis of the Study-Abroad Experiences of Chinese Students Enrolled in a Master's Degree Program. *Journal for Studies in International Education* .

Wertsch, J. (1991). *A sociocultural approach to socially shared cognition.* (L. B. Resnick, J. M. Levine, & S. D. Teasley, Eds.) Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods.* London: Sage.

Zanting, A., Verloop, N., & Vermunt, J. D. (2001). Student teachers eliciting mentors' practical knowledge and comparing it to their own beliefs. *Teaching and Teacher Education , 17*, 725-740.

Zanting, A., Verloop, N., & Vermunt, J. D. (2001). Student Teachers Eliciting Mentors' Practical Knowledge and Comparing it to their own Beliefs. *Teaching and Teacher Education , 17*, 725-740.

Appendix A – Online Survey Questions

<u>Factors of repeating a practicum</u>
Edudata Canada is a research unit located at The University of British Columbia.
Edudata is a secure facility for storing and analyzing personal information. They
use Ministry of Education approved practices and adhere strictly to security and
Confidentiality policies set out by the BC provincial government. They are also
governed by Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA)
guidelines. Your answers to these survey questions will be stored, accessed,
and used in Canada under the FOIPPA.
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study,
please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Anthony Clarke, at (xxx) xxx-xxxx
or by email at x or the coinvestigator, Athanasia
Ventouras, at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or by email at x.
Most of the questions below have been based on:
Knowles, J. G., Cole, A. L., & Presswood, C. S. (2008). Through Preservice
Teachers' Eyes. Halifax,
NS: Backalong Books.
Some questions have been added by the researcher, Athanasia Ventouras,
based on her own experiences.

Please answer as thoughtfully as possible.
Please make sure to omit names of people and schools from your responses. Use the terms:
"Mentor teacher" (aka sponsor teacher, cooperating teacher, school associate),
"Teacher educator" (aka faculty associate), and
"School".

1. I am a
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female
2. Age group:
   - ☐ 30 or less
   - ☐ 31-40
   - ☐ 41-50
   - ☐ 51 and up
3. What year were you asked to repeat your practicum?
4. From the following list, choose any/all factors of needing to repeat a practicum which
4. From the following list, choose any/all factors of needing to repeat a practicum which
YOU think were responsible for your particular practicum experience.
   - ☐ "Reality shock" of what it is really like to be in a classroom
   - ☐ Lack of programmatic preparation for practice
   - ☐ Lack of instructional and motivational skills
   - ☐ Inability to implement appropriate classroom management strategies
   - ☐ Inability to select and relate goals to objectives

☐ Lack of awareness of available procedures, routines, and alternatives
☐ Problems developing evaluation procedures and setting criteria
☐ Inadequate image of students' characteristics and abilities
☐ Discipline problems
☐ Role conflict or the discrepancy between the idealized role and the role demanded by the
☐ reality of the teaching situation
☐ Role ambiguity associated with little sense of how you want to act, or how you did not want
    to
☐ act, in the classroom
☐ Personality traits not conducive to optimal teaching and classroom leadership
☐ Isolation and lack of collegiality from cooperating/sponsor/mentor teacher
☐ Inappropriate immediate role models in cooperating/sponsor/mentor teacher
☐ Lack of understanding of the institutional culture associated with setting (rural, urban, inner
☐ city etc)
☐ Lack of understanding of the institutional culture associated with philosophy (traditional,
    nontraditional,
☐ teacher centered, student centered etc)
☐ Lack of understanding of the institutional culture associated with orientation (public, private,
☐ etc)
☐ Mismatch of grade level placement with preparation
☐ Lack of confidence in dealing with cognitive and social maturity levels of students
☐ Mismatch of subject placement to education/training.
☐ Inconsistent levels of participation and performance in university coursework
☐ Unwillingness to ask for help
☐ Lack of time
☐ Poor resource management, lack of organizational skills
☐ Role overload
☐ Physical or mental health issues
☐ Previous difficulties in educational settings
☐ Other (please describe):

5. Of the above listed factors, which one (1) do you believe was the primary factor?

6. Please describe how you felt about being asked to repeat your practicum?

7. Please describe how you responded to, the assistance that you sought, and what you did
in relation to being asked to repeat your practicum?

8. Please describe how you felt about the process(es) that were followed in relation to being
asked to repeat your practicum?

9. Please describe the outcome of being asked to repeat your practicum?

10. Please provide any suggestions or ideas that you think would be useful to consider in
relation to the practicum that would assist students in the future that might find
themselves in a similar situation to you?

11. In the space below, please feel free to add any other thoughts that you think pertain to
your being asked to repeat your practicum?

12. Do you consent to being contacted for a (maximum) 60 minute interview with the researcher to further elaborate your experiences? (If your answer is no, this survey is now complete)

    ☐ Yes

    ☐ No

13. If your answer to #13 was YES, please enter your FIRST NAME, and email address and/or telephone number here. Others completing this survey will not have access to the information you enter.

Appendix B – Sample transcribed interview

Athanasia: Okay. I guess I didn't really have the time to review what you had put down on your survey, so I'd guess you could start by maybe, I don't know, is there any questions that you have of me?

V: Questions ... I suppose the obvious one would be what is the common [inaudible 00:22], what is the end goal?

Athanasia: This is a master's project, and I guess part of, my personal interest in it is I went through X, and there was a re-entry cohort that I was put in which had all the students who were redoing their practica. Through talking with them, I realized that there were many other individuals who felt like they had had unfair circumstances in their practicums for various reasons.

When I had decided to do my master's, I just sort of you know, "What am I passionate about?" This was one of the things. Then doing searches on literature, there's very little information at all on practicum. Of what information there is, there's even less having to do with external circumstances like, for example, relationship with sponsor teachers and things like that.

Most of the literature having to do with field practica or withdrawing from practica have to do with things that the student teacher couldn't accomplish, like lesson planning and classroom management and things like that. I just felt like it was necessary to bring light to the situation.

V: I think we sort of treat the supplemental practicum like a sort of ugly spot on the faculty that they're trying to say, "Well, we didn't know what to do with them. We couldn't get rid of them, but we weren't ready to pass them on as successful teachers." We're kind of caught in the middle.

Athanasia: I know that UoC functions, does their supplemental or repeated practica a little bit differently. I had to redo the whole thing from the beginning.

V: Oh, really.

Athanasia: Everybody does. There's no [inaudible 02:26].

V: Those first fifteen weeks were torture. I can't imagine doing them over again.

Athanasia: In my case, it was a breeze the second time. It wasn't so difficult.

V: That's been my experience actually now that I'm in the classroom. The weeks just come and go, you don't really notice.

Athanasia: Exactly, exactly. In my case, the experiences that I had, I was given courses that were not in my teaching area. I was given PE, my background is science, which was fine for my short practicum because the sponsor teacher that I had was very good at talking to me about what we were doing and why. When I taught for my short practicum in PE, it was very good. I mean, reasonably good.

Then I had to switch sponsors because of scheduling issues, then there was a whole lot of time management issue on the side of the sponsors. They weren't available for helping me and it was quite difficult.

V: Are you looking at both Universities?

Athanasia: I didn't attempt to get ethics approval for working at X because J was so great at agreeing to contact individuals, so I didn't really feel like it was really necessary at this point. I've got lots of people to interview, as you can imagine. There's quite a few people interested in talking to me.

V: Actually, I should ask you, have you talked to, there's a lady named N Have you heard that name?

Athanasia: No.

V: She was, like myself, a physics major. She also actually has a PhD in physics, she was in the program the same year I was. You know, obviously, struggled in practicum and had to do a repeat practicum. I think she actually, she fought it for awhile, which is something that I never did, and ended up giving up. She said she's now working as a researcher at X, which is the big particle accelerator.

Athanasia: Yeah, at UoC.

V: I think that she has quite a huge wealth of stuff written on the subject.

Athanasia: Oh, wow.

V: I know that she had me read, I think she had written something like close to about 10,000 words on her experience. She sent it my way for me to read.

Athanasia: Oh, wow. I'd like ... What's her last name again?

V: N.

Athanasia: Okay. You think she would mind if I tried to get in touch with her, in terms of confidentiality issues? Speaking of which, I need to get that consent form signed by you at some point, but I'm assuming you consent.

V: Yes. I'll look around for it and I'll send it out.

Athanasia: I can resend it to you so you don't have to look for it. Do you think she would mind if I got in touch with her?

V: I know that at the time, she was really looking for anyone who would have a kind ear to what had happened with her. I don't, I haven't spoken to her in a while, so I'm not sure how she's doing now. She's kind of put it all behind her.

Athanasia: Well, okay. I'll speak with my supervisor and see what she thinks about that. Thank you for the tip. Okay, so why don't you tell me about your experiences?

V: It definitely was a comedy of errors straight from the get-go. Looking back, I have so much more perspective on it now than I did then. I guess we'll start at the beginning. When I entered the teaching program it had been a year since I had done my physics major, and though I'd had the odd job or two, and nothing really permanent, nothing really all that exciting.

I was looking for really something for A, that I could actually get into, and B, something that would really pique my interest. The program itself, I think we did something like 6 or 7 courses in that first semester from September to December. Three of them were actually content-oriented. There was a math one, a science one, and then a physics one. The other four were more to do with just teaching in general.

It was not until I looked back it that I realized that none of those 7 courses really prepared me for my practicum, especially when it came to the nuts and bolts of actually making a lesson plan or a unit plan or any of those types of things teachers have to do on a daily basis. I'd never heard of BCeSIS for taking attendance and all that. I just was thrown into my practicum at the end of January, it was all completely new to me.

Athanasia: Could you elaborate on the kind of things that you were doing that, in the courses that didn't really, that you felt didn't prepare you for these daily things, like maybe an example?

V: I'm just really thinking to some specific examples. For example, with our science class, a lot of the time would be spent the professor would tell stories and tell anecdotes, and a fair amount of it would have to do with his teaching. I guess I probably gained a lot from it, but there was never any time spent actually looking at the curriculum.

They would show us a video of a science lab that they had done for their students or we would go through an activity where we'd create mind maps, which was something that they suggested we do with our classes, especially at younger ages. We're getting a lot of useful activities and ideas, but it was never really, it seemed all kind of random.

What was one of the other things we did? Actually one of the things I enjoyed doing is that we did actually create one lesson. One lesson plan came out of that class, which is probably the only one I did do.

My friend G and I, we were teaching the subject of torque, which is a physics concept, as you know, and we put together a series of blocks that you could balance and the math behind how they would balance, like on a teeter-totter, which had to do with the torque on the teeter-totter. We did a 15 minute presentation, which was our idea of a lesson. We were given constructive feedback and all that good stuff.

Athanasia: Had you looked at the curriculum? Had you been instructed to look at the curriculum in doing that lesson or presentation, or was it just something that you knew was taught in high school that you decided to do?

V: It was something that we were both were intimately familiar with the subject. We talked, I should say, and just went for it. I mean at that point the curriculum wasn't even on my radar. The fact that I could go and look at an IRP, I'd never heard of one and I didn't know where to look. None of that was on my radar, like I said.

The math class, which I quite enjoyed, we spent a lot of time solving puzzles, and I guess the purpose of that would be for us to learn that math can actually be fun, we can teach it and have fun with it, but we never spent very much time actually looking at math as we would cover it, like looking at math principles and what have you.

It wasn't actually until I took another math class after the practicum that we went through all of the nitty gritty of okay, how do you teach this concept, how do you assess this concept, you know that kind of stuff? We should have had it, but we didn't actually cover it in a formal class.

Athanasia: Okay. What about your short practicum?

V: We showed up at the school and we met the sponsor teachers and there was confusion around who would end up teaching me, because, like I said, I was able to teach math, science, and physics and they weren't sure who was going to take me and for what classes. They ended up deciding I would teach Science 8, Science 9 from one science teacher, Physics 11 with another sponsor teacher, and then Calculus 12 with another sponsor teacher.

Athanasia: You had 4 preps?

V: Yes, 4 preps.

Athanasia: Three sponsor teachers. Was this for both the short and the long practiums?

V: Obviously, this was just the decision-making process in a short two weeks, and then that was the schedule I start back in the 13 week.

Athanasia: Were you concerned at all about that?

V: Not overly, I mean, I had said to them that I'd heard 2, 3 preps was the ideal and maybe 1 to 2 sponsor teachers, but by the sounds of it, I really didn't have much option.

              It was a weird case where we actually had 8 student teachers at one school and a central sponsor teacher, whereas oftentimes you'll have, you'll be on your own in a school and the sponsor teacher will swoop in and swoop out, many teachers at many schools.

Athanasia: Did you do any teaching on your short practicum?

V: No. I sat at the back of the classes and was, I sort of would participate minimally. I introduced myself and all that, and would contribute with a comment here or there, but I was kind of designated to that peanut gallery kind of spot in the back of the classroom. I only actually sat in with my sponsor teachers for maybe about two or three classes.

              We were told to go and check out other classes and other teachers. I went around and I popped into pretty much one of everything. I popped down to music class, the art class, English class, social studies class. I saw a whole lot of other teachers who were working at the school.

Athanasia: I guess there was no way to judge what kind of feedback you were getting on the short practicum because you didn't teach at all.

V: No, there was no teaching being done by me, anyway.

Athanasia: Did other student teachers do teaching?

V: I don't think so. Actually, I think I remember S was one of the girls who also was in science. She was doing science and biology with a teacher at school and because he was her only sponsor teacher, she spent all of her time with him. He would have her get up and teach little portions, little segments.

Athanasia: Okay. How about the long practicum?

V: Let's see, in January, we ended up doing a lot of social studies kind of classes at UoC, a lot of like social justice kind of courses and stuff like that. Now not only had we sort of left all the science and math classes behind, but we definitely weren't focusing on lesson planning or anything like that. Right up until basically I started the practicum, I was still in la-la land. I thought this was great.

I was completely clueless, it's kind of embarrassing, thinking back on how little I was concerned about my practicum, you know what I mean? It wasn't even on my radar. I was just thinking, "Okay, we'll enjoy the classes what we can," and then unfortunately I'll have to go and teach myself.

Athanasia: Sorry, just to take one step back. Between the short and the long practicum, did you know what units you would be teaching for those classes at all? Did you have time to prepare?

V: For my Calculus 12 class I knew exactly what I was heading into, my other two sponsor teachers told me that they just had no way of anticipating where they'd be in January, or I guess technically the start of February and to contact them closer to the time.

Athanasia: Let's continue talking about your long practicum, then. Then you arrived at the school, and ...

V: My very first week, I started out with two preps, so I would teach a Physics 11 class one day and I would teach a Science 8 class the next day. That was both of those.

Athanasia: Had you had a chance to go over your lessons with your sponsors before starting to teach?

V: With my Physics 11 class, I had, yeah.

Athanasia: How did the first week go?

V: Oh, terribly.

Athanasia: What happened?

V: Let's see, with my Physics 11 class, we were doing optics. I had planned a lesson that was a straight hour and 20 minutes of lecture with absolutely no student involvement whatsoever.

I mean really, just to show the depth of my cluelessness as to what it means to be a teacher and to have a lesson where I engage the students and they are actually participating. I literally talked at them for an hour and 20 minutes.

That, coupled with my nervousness and my exhaustion and all that, I was just completely wiped out by it once I was done.

Athanasia: Wow.

V: My sponsor teacher thought they were being kind. I don't know whether they were or weren't, but they said, "Okay, for the first class, I'm not going to watch you or critique you or anything. I'm going to be just in the back room. I'll be here if you need me, but otherwise, just do your thing, which in retrospect was not what I needed at the time.

Athanasia: This is a lesson that they had seen, right? What kind of feedback had they given you on that lesson?

V: If I remember correctly, they said they'd been so busy with their kids, that they hadn't had time to make too many changes, but it had seemed good.

Athanasia: Okay. For your first lesson, what did you think about it after you were done, other than being exhausted?

V: I had taken many opportunities to bird walk during the technical aspect of it. I would tell a story or two about my favorite physicists or stuff like that, which I thought was engaging and interesting. I'm sure they probably looked at me like, "Who the heck is this guy?"

It was mixed because at, I was so incredibly nervous and stressed that I was kind of miserable when it was finally over. I was relieved. At the same sense, I was, "All right, I think I can do this thing." It was kind of my first reaction.

Athanasia: After that?

V: The next day I went into my Science 8 class and I taught something, which in retrospect was probably a little bit better. Oddly enough, we were doing something similar. I think we were doing the eye. Also optics, oddly enough. That went all right, but only all right from my perspective, because my sponsor teacher hated it, which was their own fault for not really looking at it ahead of time.

Athanasia: Tell me about the fact that they hated it. I guess that you gathered this from the post lesson conference?

V: We spoke at length about it.

Athanasia: Do you remember much about that conversation?

V: Not really. I think they maybe had a problem with how I explained the concepts, like what examples I'd use. I'm not sure what was wrong with it, but they had a very different way of doing it, something that would be a growing thing between us as the lessons went on.

Athanasia: How did you feel after the conference?

V: You've got to understand, if you think I like to talk, this person loves to talk. I would be caught in this awkward situation every day after school because I had that last block of the day. I didn't want to be rude and leave, but I was trapped and we would literally talk from 3:05, which is when school ends, we'd talk all the way through to about 5:00.

Athanasia: About one lesson?

V: Sometimes about the lesson, sometimes about other stuff that they felt like having a gab about.

Athanasia: How did that impact your future lesson planning?

V: I was very short on time. It was often, most days, well, every second day after his class.

Athanasia: Did they observe you in every class?

V: Yup.

Athanasia: You had, obviously, a post lesson conference after every lesson, right?

V: We would always start with talking about the lesson. They'd share examples of how they would teach something, then they'd get off on a tangent about something else that's been going on in one of their classes, then they'd start talking about their life. Then they'd start talking about me and then this, and that.

          They could not read my body language, that had to have been what it was because I would slowly inch toward the door, I'd start packing up my stuff. I had my shoulder bag on, I had my coat on, I'd be inching towards the door. We'd still be talking.

          It even got to the point where I'd be out in the hallway, I'd be halfway down the hallway, and he's still talking to me. I'd just be inching for so many minutes that's how far I had got ... In retrospect, some of the things they told me were very, very helpful.

          It just, that wasn't the time to bring that to my attention, as I'm just desperate to leave after a long day. One thing that we did during those talks is that I would actually teach them some science concepts.

Athanasia: Oh, how come?

V: It sounds weird, but they would ask me, "So explain to me what result did you get?" This was when I was teaching Science 9 and we were talking, but as an

example, they'd ask, "I haven't been able to wrap my head around voltage, can you explain it to me?"

At first I thought this is like a test or something like that, but they genuinely wanted to know. I'd try and give them some examples and stuff, and it wasn't until about halfway through the practicum that I found out that they taught ELL for 28 years of their career and had only just switched to teaching science.

Athanasia: Oh.

V: Imagine my surprise when I find that out. It made total sense. They taught science like an ELL teacher would, which I began to notice.

Athanasia: What do you mean?

V: There was a lot of fill-in-the-blank kind of stuff, there was a lot of word problems, which is fine. Even their approach, like they would never ... I'm trying to remember ... I think he was just very language heavy, like the definition of the concept is more important than the concept itself.

Athanasia: Oh, I see. After that first week of teaching, did you at some point start to get feedback from your physics sponsor? In that first week?

V: They would never have time for me in the school, but they would always have me send my lesson plans to them ahead time and they would send them back with corrections. Things started to improve, partly as I was getting feedback, but also in terms of the fact I would be almost implementing the lesson they had described. Yes, there were a lot of changes made.

Athanasia: Then after the first week, then did you pick up the other classes?

V: I did that for two weeks, and then during my third week I picked up the calculus classes. I taught two of those.

Athanasia: How did that go?

V: It went really well, actually. That was the place where I had the most confidence and the most success and the most help from that sponsor teacher.

Athanasia: Okay. Could you tell me what differentiated that support you got from that sponsor teacher from the others?

V: Definitely their feedback was very concise, very clear, and they only ever fed me one thing to improve at a time.

Athanasia: Okay. Would you be able to give me a specific interaction that you had with them that you remember that maybe sticks out in your mind, that maybe made you feel good or helped?

V: Definitely one of the skills that I gained from that class was the ability to ask questions to my audience. They had those grade 12 very well trained so it was definitely an easy way for me to learn.

That would be something that they would be prompting for, they said, "Make sure, once you've introduced something, that you stop, give them time, allow them to copy the information, allow them to absorb the information, allow them an opportunity to ask questions."

Then, most importantly, that as part of teaching that concept, you have to ask them to answer the questions, like a guided approach. That was one of the first things I learned and how she helped me through that.

Athanasia: When did you pick up the fourth class?

V: The fifth week I picked up the fourth prep. At this point I was teaching two Science 9 blocks, two Calculus 12 blocks, the Physics 11 block, and the Science 8. Six blocks out of the eight, I believe.

Athanasia: That was the same sponsor teacher that you had for Science 8, right?

V: Yes, the Science 9 teacher.

Athanasia: When did the problems start to become evident?

V: You can, based on the anecdotes that you're hearing, gauge that there was a certain level of frustration I was experiencing in just really being lousy but trying so hard. With each teacher, it was a completely different experience.

My frustration with my science teacher had everything to do with their inability to make things clear in terms of what they wanted me to do. I think another good problem with that class was the fact that they had very little management over their class. They were very loud, very rambunctious. They didn't listen to theeacher. He would have to talk over them, so it's no surprise I had to do the same thing.

With my Physics 11 teacher, the recurring theme with that one is that I would send lessons to him by email and they would be sent back with corrections, but they wouldn't usually be sent back until late the night before. In fact, many times, I would already be in bed before the emails were sent, so I'd get them the morning of and have to react to the changes in order to teach that very lesson.

Athanasia: How much in advance were you giving him the lessons?

V: Not very far in advance, I'd say maybe two days.

Athanasia: In that time period, had you been observed by your FA at all?

V: I'm sure I must have.

Athanasia: You don't really remember?

V: I don't remember specifically but I believe they tried to do once a week. I don't think they did the first week, but the second week she did one, and it's been one every week after that.

Athanasia: Is it safe to assume they didn't play a huge role in the feedback that you were getting or in affecting your teaching?

V: Actually, you know it was weird because I had some of my biggest problems with them, actually.

Athanasia: Oh, okay.

V: I'm not painting a very good picture of myself.

Athanasia: Could you tell me about that?

V: They were very old. They actually retired immediately after that year.They retired in June, we had finished our practicum in May. It just didn't seem like their heart was in it.

               I had a couple problems with them. One is that they were always on their phone, I'm assuming what was texting during class. It meant that their reports often missed out stuff. One notable example was, and this would drive me crazy, I had give an assignment to draw a diagram for my students, and I had specified that as part of the rubric they needed to include color to get an extra mark, to get a full 10 out of 10.

               Their criticism was that if you're going to mark them on color, you need to provide them with colored pens or pencil crayons. That's perfectly valid.

               The problem was somehow, in them sitting at the back of my class texting, they had missed the part of my lesson where I said, "All right, everyone, I have pens and pencil crayons up at the front. You need to come up and pick some colors out for your diagrams."

It was that kind of, and they really made a big stink about it, too, and I had to defend myself and say, "Well look, I actually did do that. How come you missed it?"

Athanasia: What was their response when you told them that you did do that?

V: they said they didn't see it, and they didn't take it out of the report. The report stayed that way.

Athanasia: Excuse me. Wow.

V: I put this in the survey I wrote to you, but I'll reiterate it again. Actually the biggest problem with them was about a third of the way through practicum, I was sat in the staff room during my prep and I was working on my laptop, writing a lesson plan. You have to understand this is a really, really big staff room. It's really long, it has big windows all across one end of it, so it can be a little glaring.

Midway through me sitting in the staff room, they came in and sat down at the staff table, and I guess they didn't notice that I was there? They started talking about me to some of the other staff that were present, staff that I didn't know. I can hear them speaking quite candidly, and they started to say some rather disparaging things about me.

Athanasia: Like what?

V: I'll have to try and remember. They brought up the, actually this would have been around the same time, they brought up the fact I had questioned them on the report about the colored pens and crayons, and they were complaining about how I had the gall to argue with them about it. I was so shocked that they were saying that about me when I was sitting right there, and they hadn't noticed that I was sitting right there.

I didn't have the guts to approach them, because in my mind I'm thinking, "Okay, yes, a faculty adviser is supposed to be on your side." They're supposed to be helping you through this process. At the same time, this is the one who's gives me the pass or the fail, I don't want to get on their bad side, so I didn't want to approach them.

Athanasia: Right.

V: I ended up calling J, actually. J. He said, "Oh, it's probably an isolated incident," and blah, blah, blah. You know, "Don't worry about it, probably not as bad as you thought," and just talked me out of worrying too much about it apart from the fact that it was really too late to change practicum situations, you know what I mean?

Athanasia: Okay. I'd like to know what led you, like some specifics about what led you to ... Were you, at what point did you withdraw, or were you asked to withdraw, did you do it on your own? What event sparked it?

V: I actually didn't withdraw, I did the full 13 weeks. It wasn't until the very last day of practicum that the decision was made for me to do an extended practicum, like essentially a repeat that would take place in the fall of the next year.

               But even just the way they, and I'm sorry now I'm just going to sound like I'm complaining, but the way they brought it up to me was after class one day and sort of in passing, "Oh, V, remind me ..."