BEGINNING SECONDARY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE
TEACHER-ON-CALL EXPERIENCE

by

LORNE A. BODIN

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Department of Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction
The University of British Columbia
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to gain insight into the nature of T.O.C. teaching from the perspective of beginning secondary teachers. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with four participants. Each participant was interviewed once a month over a four-month period from October 1999 to January 2000. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. Data analysis for this exploratory study was based on the constant comparative method as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The results obtained from the data analysis are presented in terms of six common themes reflecting the beginning teachers' experiences as teachers on call. In addition to the common themes, important issues relating to T.O.C. teaching as expressed by the participants were also explored.

The findings of this study indicate that the challenges associated with T.O.C. teaching as described by the participants are largely a result of the T.O.C.'s lack of familiarity with the teaching environment. The lack of T.O.C. familiarity with the teaching environment impacts all aspects of the T.O.C. experience. Preparatory measures in pre-service teacher education programs and strategies for in-service programs for T.O.C.s by school districts and schools are suggested.
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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

"Well," said brother Bear as Barry and Lizzy Bruin came up to greet them. "Have you heard anything yet? Who's our sub?"

Brother and Freddy and Barry were all in Teacher Bob's class. They had been wondering about the substitute teacher all weekend.

"Her name is Ms. Barr," said Barry. "I just heard it from Too-Tall."

"Since when are you hanging around with Too-Tall?" asked Brother.

"Since I heard we're going to have a sub," said Barry. "Get it?" he added with a big grin.

Brother got it all right. It didn't surprise him that Too-Tall was already laying plans for the substitute. After all, it was almost as if you were supposed to have a little fun with a sub. But what did surprise Brother was that he was grinning a little himself.

(Berenstain, 1993 p. 2-3)

It is probably safe to state that all students in B.C. have had contact with a substitute teacher. Peterson (1991) estimates that a full half-year of a student's school life is spent with a substitute teacher. All too often, substitute teachers face a trying classroom atmosphere that may give mischievous students an opportunity to 'perform'. Substitute teachers indicate that students are not the only ones who treat them poorly. McHugh (1998) indicates that substitute teachers perceive that regular teachers and school administrators do not treat them as professionals within the teaching profession.

For the purpose of this study, I have used the term teacher on call, or T.O.C., to refer to a teacher who is employed by a school or school district to temporarily replace a regular teacher who is absent due to illness, etc. In the past, these itinerant teachers have been labeled as substitute teachers, relief teachers, supply teachers, emergency teachers, or simply, subs.¹ In British Columbia, the B.C. Teachers' Federation has used the term teacher on call, or T.O.C., since the 1992 - 1994 Collective Bargaining Agreement. Prior

¹I have not replaced substitute teacher or substitute when it appears in a quotation or passage cited from an article.
to that date, the Collective Bargaining Handbook referred to them as substitute teachers (Ross, personal communication, 2000).

In this chapter, the rationale, purpose, and methods used in this study will be outlined. An overview of the study will also be provided.

**Rationale for the Study**

Historically, the basic system of using T.O.C.s for absent teachers has changed little in past decades. Stevens (1969) and Drake (1981) recognize that the use of T.O.C.s is still antiquated while reforms in other areas of education have moved forward.

Professionally and politically, T.O.C.s are dealing with a variety of issues including wage equity (Fodor, 1990), pension awards (McMahen, 1999), professional regard (McHugh, 1998), and the methods in place for dispatching T.O.C.s to schools (B.C.T.F., 1993; Campbell, Erickson, & Fodor, 1995). Progress in resolving many T.O.C. issues is often very slow as T.O.C.s who are politically involved in promoting T.O.C. causes may receive full time appointments and consequently, their professional priorities change (Bigler, 1991). T.O.C.s may neglect opportunities for improving their professional standing as T.O.C. employment is viewed as a temporary step to full time employment (McHugh, 1998).

Employment as a T.O.C. may require skills and practices that differ significantly from the requirements of a regular teacher (Friedman, 1983; Warren, 1988). The transient, temporary nature of T.O.C. teaching limits the ability of T.O.C.s to legitimize themselves in the classroom and consequently, forces T.O.C.s to function in a marginal situation or on the periphery of the school system (Clifton & Rambaran, 1987; McHugh, 1998). Anxiety and apprehensions about teaching as a T.O.C. may detract from the
classroom effectiveness of T.O.C.s (Johnson, Holcombe, & Vance, 1988) as T.O.C.s are torn between focusing on behavior management of students, or maintaining instructional continuity in the classroom (Drake, 1981; Warren, 1988). Contributing further to potentially frustrating teaching experiences for T.O.C.s is the apparent lack of support for T.O.C.s in schools from district administration, school administration, and regular staff (Augustin, 1987; Bontempo & Deay, 1986; Drake, 1981, Drury, 1988; Frosch, 1984; Johnson, Holcombe, & Vance, 1988; McHugh, 1998; Warren, 1998).

Much of the focus of T.O.C. attention, especially in the U.S., is on recruiting, training, and maintaining a pool of T.O.C.s who are able to make effective use of classroom time (Brace, 1990; Drury, 1988; Nidds & McGerald, 1994; Rosborough, Sherbine, & Miller, 1993; Wilson, 1999). In the U.S., T.O.C. requirements are varied with the minimum requirement in some states being a high school diploma (Wescott Dodd, 1984). Dendwick (1993) outlines the apparent differences between T.O.C. teachers in Canada and the U.S., particularly in light of the fact that Canadian T.O.C.s tend to be certified teachers. Canadian provinces such as Newfoundland and Labrador require an education degree as the minimum requirement for employment as a T.O.C., the same requirement as for a regular teacher (Ash, personal communication, 2000). Ontario requires that T.O.C.s be fully qualified as teachers (Amato, personal communication, 2000); Alberta requires T.O.C.s to be fully qualified as teachers (Alberta Teachers’ Federation, 2000); and British Columbia requires that T.O.C.s are fully qualified as teachers (Schaefer, 1999). In a few instances in Canada, some T.O.C.s may not be qualified teachers but this situation occurs primarily in rural areas where T.O.C. numbers are low (McMahen, 1999; Canadian Teachers’ Federation, 1999).
Although there appears to be little focus on T.O.C. teaching in pre-service education programs (Upitis, personal communication, 1999), there is a widespread feeling of the need to include T.O.C. preparation in teacher education programs (Ostapczuk, 1994; Parsons and Dhillon, 1978; Soares, 1988). The need for discussion and an awareness of the demands of T.O.C. work in teacher education programs is obvious as many beginning teachers are using T.O.C. employment as a means to secure a full time teaching appointment (B.C. College of Teachers, 1997; B.C.T.F., 1993; de Luna, 1990; Nidds & McGerald, 1994; Ostapczuk, 1994; Parsons & Dhillon, 1978; Pronin, 1983; Scefernack, Vanderlinde, & Gilliss, 1985; Soares, 1988; Wescott Dodd, 1984). In light of the T.O.C. literature reviewed for this study, beginning teachers may be facing situations as T.O.C.s that they are not prepared for and these experiences may be largely negative in nature, frustrating to the T.O.C.s, and ultimately demoralizing for all concerned. In discussions with a beginning teacher who is employed as a T.O.C., the T.O.C. expressed a concern that goes to the heart of the T.O.C. situation for beginning teachers:

I feel that a gap exists. You’re trained as a teacher and then you work as a T.O.C. I’m worried that the longer I T.O.C., the more skills I lose from the program [teacher education program] and the harder it will be to start for real in my own classroom. (Personal communication, June 4, 1999)

While there is a body of literature which addresses various aspects of T.O.C. teaching from the perspectives of school-districts, school administrators, and regular teachers, there is little that explores T.O.C. teaching from the perspective of the teacher on call. In British Columbia, a majority of beginning teachers start their careers as T.O.C.s (B.C. College of Teachers, 1997) and they often begin with little understanding of the challenges associated with T.O.C. teaching.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the T.O.C. experience from the perspective of beginning secondary teachers. Specifically, the intent was to explore the context of T.O.C. teaching and the experiences associated with T.O.C. teaching for each participant. It is hoped that the results from this study will contribute to making the T.O.C. experience professionally meaningful and productive for T.O.C.s., school districts, regular teachers, and students. The research focus for this inquiry was:

Given the nature of T.O.C. employment and how the demands of T.O.C. teaching may differ from the demands of regular teaching, this study will explore perceptions of the nature of T.O.C. teaching held by beginning secondary teachers who are employed as T.O.C.s.

Overview of the Methodology

Data were collected through interviews with four beginning secondary teachers who were employed as T.O.C.s with the Richmond School District (#38), British Columbia. The participants were also employed as T.O.C.s in adjacent metropolitan school districts. After a preliminary literature review, a general focus emerged which became the initial focus for the study. Sampling was purposeful with four beginning secondary teachers selected. Interviews were used for data collection. The interviews were semi-structured in nature with previous interviews guiding the questioning and direction of subsequent interviews. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. Data analysis was based on the constant comparative method (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As this study was exploratory in nature, units of information were identified from the interviews, the units were categorized, and from these various categories, common themes were constructed. A common theme was defined as requiring each of the four participants to have described similar perceptions or incidents.
When a theme emerged from the data, a tentative name and definition was assigned. The results from this process are presented in terms of common themes reflecting the experiences of the participants. In addition, the participants’ definitions of T.O.C. teaching, the practical context of a T.O.C.’s day, and reflections on the positive aspects and value of the T.O.C. experience are presented.

**Overview of the Study**

Chapter One introduces and briefly outlines the study in terms of its rationale, purpose, and methodology. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature on teachers on call and teaching on call. Chapter Three describes the methodology employed for this study. Chapter Four explores the experiences of the T.O.C.s and presents common themes and associated perceptions. In Chapter Five, issues are discussed, and conclusions, including measures for pre-service and in-service implementation, are presented.
CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

What do T.O.C.s do?

What does a T.O.C. actually do in schools and what are the expectations of a T.O.C. in a classroom? The earlier excerpt from the Berenstain Bears children's book gives an idea of students' perspectives of a day with a T.O.C. The following may provide insight to how a T.O.C. views a typical day replacing a regular teacher:

You are called to substitute early in the morning. You travel to a school unknown to you. You are shown to a room where everything is unfamiliar. You do not know fire-drill procedures, earthquake drills, or the early warning system. You are given another teacher's daybook to teach from. The children are unknown to you. Classroom rules are unknown. The class list may even be put away and you can't find it. Materials may not be easily available. Where is the VCR? Textbooks? Washrooms?

As soon as the children arrive they are prepared to act up because it is only a sub. Goof off day!! Your objective for the day is to complete the assigned work in a professional manner. Are the children permitted to go to the washroom without permission? Some students say yes, some say no. Can students go to the library anytime? Any change in routine causes problems with some children. Who is allergic to bees? Who removes children during the day? Where is the gym, computer room, and the library anyway?

Recess time. We've made it this far. What is the coffee money procedure? No one talks to you and you feel like an intruder in a circle of close-knit friends. You're making progress now. You know the names of those children that have made things challenging and if you come back to this school again you will know more.

This is the day-to-day routine for some of us. It is true that the more we return to the same school the more comfortable we feel. Once inside we face the same challenges as regular contract teachers. (Campbell, McErvel, & Palmer, 1993 p. 3)

Literature relating to T.O.C.s, especially in a Canadian context, is very limited (Dendwick, 1993). Much of the literature is from an American perspective and focuses on outlining steps that can be undertaken at the school and district level to establish an efficient T.O.C. program. These articles are directed toward school or district
administrators and are largely anecdotal in nature, as the authors tend to offer suggestions based upon personal experience or observation.

**Theoretical perspectives on T.O.C. teaching**

There are, however, some studies which have looked beyond the scope of these “How to” articles and have employed methodology designed to attempt to provide a theoretical perspective to T.O.C. teaching. An often cited study was conducted by Clifton and Rambaran (1987) in which they lament that: "there has been an absence of theories that can help us understand these complaints and ultimately help us improve substitute teaching. In this article, a theoretical perspective, and the concomitant evidence, on substitute teaching is developed” (p. 311). Clifton and Rambaran (1987) employed a variety of qualitative methods such as observation, interviewing, student essays, and participant-as-observers to gather data regarding nine T.O.C.s in seven schools from elementary to high school level. Clifton and Rambaran argue that T.O.C. teaching is a “marginal situation” (p. 311). Specifically, they explain:

In other words, a marginal person is one who is not integrated into the formal structure of an institution, and consequently cannot contribute meaningfully to the successful achievement of the desired goals of the institution. Therefore, a marginal situation is one in which there is no clear set of rules that legitimate the person’s behavior, and consequently other actors will not voluntarily comply with this person’s directives. (p. 314)

Clifton and Rambaran focus on two factors that they feel may account for the lack of legitimacy of T.O.C.s. First, T.O.C.s do not have the authority of regular teachers, and second, they lack knowledge of the rituals of the classrooms in which they work.

Clifton and Rambaran (1987) present the view that in comparison to regular teachers, T.O.C.s are perceived by students, staff, and administration as lacking official status, expertise, and experience. Students resent a “foreign” presence in their classroom
and consequently behavior and academic progress deteriorates, staff are unfriendly or cold toward the T.O.C. and may not view the T.O.C. as competent, and administrators often pay little attention to the T.O.C. A superintendent interviewed by Clifton and Rambaran explains that “Some principals look at the substitute as a one-day employee who isn’t worth all the fuss. They see no real commitment to helping that person out. They really see that person as just putting in time” (p. 316). Consequently, T.O.C.s are not granted the same authority as regular teachers and are operating in a marginal situation.

Clifton and Rambaran (1987) feel that T.O.C.s also lack legitimacy because they are not aware of the rituals, or daily activities, of the classrooms they work in. Teaching styles usually differ between the T.O.C. and the regular teacher, discipline techniques differ, and new rituals introduced by the T.O.C. may confuse and frustrate students. An excerpt from a student’s essay captures the essence of these challenges:

Most of the subs I’ve had, had many problems controlling the class. We try to take advantage of them because they don’t know anything about us. They don’t know who are the “smart alecs”. They don’t know anything about what’s going on because they are not there all the time like the regular teacher. So you can get away with almost anything. (p. 323)

A T.O.C. may find himself or herself focusing on managerial aspects of the classroom rituals simply as a means to survive, rather that dealing with the learning experiences of the student.

Clifton and Rambaran (1987) feel the issues of authority and rituals are inter-related as they state:

“If a substitute teacher does not know the rituals of the classroom, he or she will probably find it difficult to exercise authority. Moreover, if the substitute teacher has difficulty exercising authority, he or she will probably find it difficult to learn the rituals of the classroom” (p. 325).
Clifton and Rambaran (1987) conclude their article with claims intended to improve the situation for T.O.C.s. They call for treatment of T.O.C.s as professional staff members, ensuring that T.O.C.s have an official position with rights and responsibilities. It is advised that T.O.C.s teach only those subject areas and grade levels that they are trained to teach, and that districts assign T.O.C.s to work in a small group of schools. Clifton and Rambaran feel that T.O.C.s should be provided with opportunities for in-service training and finally, they state that more research must be conducted on T.O.C. teaching.

Friedman (1983) uses an unique approach to “get inside” the working life of a T.O.C. and his findings are similar to the conclusions of Clifton and Rambaran (1987). During academic leave as a university sociology professor at California State University (Los Angeles), Friedman worked as a T.O.C. in elementary, junior high, and high school settings. While acting as a participant-observer, Friedman identified two major task demand/adaptation areas of T.O.C. teaching: order-maintenance, and assignment/execution. Friedman defines task/demand as situations facing T.O.C.s and adaptation as steps taken by T.O.C.s to deal with those situations.

Friedman (1983) defines order-maintenance as those activities related to the functioning of the class. Discipline was the main activity of importance as Friedman recognized there was a “cultural expectation” that students would try to get away with more when a T.O.C. was present (p. 117). He specifically outlined the phenomenon of the “false friend”, or student who volunteered help initially and then became the main discipline problem (p. 119). Friedman feels that the measure of a T.O.C.’s day revolves around order-maintenance and that a T.O.C. can adapt to the demands of order-
maintenance by giving the immediate impression of being a teacher (impression management) and by holding students accountable for work to be completed.

Friedman (1983) defines assignment/execution as providing for the continuity of the regular teacher’s lesson plans. As many teachers left inadequate lesson plans, often for legitimate reasons such as sudden illness or personal concerns, Friedman found that he needed to improvise a variety of skills that could be used to “fill in the blanks” (p. 122). Friedman concedes that assignment/execution is very difficult due to the nature of T.O.C. teaching but he adds that most T.O.C.s have unique personal touches that add greatly to the regular course instruction. Friedman’s study, coupled with the conclusions of Clifton and Rambaran (1987), indicates that teaching as a T.O.C. may require a different set of skills than those usually required of a regular teacher. Friedman describes T.O.C. teaching as “an extreme, speeded up form of regular teaching” (p. 114).

Apprehensions/Areas of concern for T.O.C.s

When the bell rang for morning recess, the cubs began to file out of the room. As Ms. Barr bent down over her desk to close her earth-science book, Too-Tall nodded to Skuzz. Skuzz pulled out a paper airplane from behind his back and let it fly at Ms. Barr. The airplane rose toward the ceiling and then came back down and poked its pointy nose under Ms. Barr’s headband. She was a funny sight with a paper airplane sticking out of her head. (Berenstain, 1993, p. 13-14)

The cubs seem to exemplify Friedman’s (1983) concept of cultural expectations as students try to get away with more negative behavior when a T.O.C. is in the classroom. If given the opportunity, I’m sure Ms. Barr would be able to outline aspects of T.O.C. employment that were a concern to her, professionally and personally.

Bontempo and Deay (1986) show in a study that in one district of about 400 regular teachers, from twenty to fifty T.O.C.s were employed each school day. Bontempo and Deay feel there is a lack of literature on T.O.C.s and this reflects the fact
that T.O.C.s are a neglected part of the teaching profession. Consequently, Bontempo and Deay argue that before programs can be developed or refined to improve the efficiency of T.O.C.s, further analysis of the concerns of T.O.C.s is necessary.

Bontempo and Deay (1986) surveyed T.O.C.s to determine what situations do they (T.O.C.s) feel least prepared to deal with. A content analysis of the responses established seven categories of concern: discipline, classroom plans and procedures, knowledge of program, learner differences, organizing/managing learning experiences, professional role, and school rules/regulations. Bontempo and Deay found that the two most frequent responses dealt with discipline, and classroom plans and procedures. The concerns of the T.O.C.s in Bontempo and Deay’s study reflects the assertion of Clifton and Rambaran (1987) that the lack of authority and lack of knowledge of classroom rituals limit a T.O.C.’s effectiveness.

Bontempo and Deay (1986) identify that T.O.C.s need the support of administrators and regular teachers in order to become more effective while in the classroom. They also argue that teacher educators must become more involved in preparing new teachers for work as T.O.C.s. It is suggested that methods courses address issues that new teachers will face when working as a T.O.C. Bontempo and Deay assert that teacher educators must realize “their responsibility to these forgotten professionals” (p. 89).

Johnson, Holcombe, and Vance (1988) also address the apprehensions of T.O.C.s as they state that innovations have occurred in other areas of education, while the area of T.O.C teaching has maintained its “antiquated status” (p. 89). Johnson, Holcombe, and Vance (1988) employed a Likert-style questionnaire where respondents indicated the
degree of apprehension they felt about forty-three anxiety factors related to T.O.C. teaching. In addition to analyzing results related to the anxiety factors of T.O.C.s, Johnson, Holcombe, and Vance also examined the results to see if there were significant differences in apprehension among groups based on years employed as a T.O.C.

Johnson, Holcombe, and Vance (1988) found that T.O.C.s had various reasons for working as a T.O.C. such as becoming more visible and employable, alternate source of income, keeping up to date, and gaining experience. Respondents indicated generally that there was moderate apprehension in areas such as a lack of lesson plans, teaching in an unfamiliar subject area, classroom procedures, discipline, relationships with supervisors and colleagues, and communication with regular teachers. It was indicated that first-year T.O.C.s were much less clear about their task/role than were T.O.C.s who had two years or more experience.

Johnson, Holcombe, and Vance (1988) conclude that despite the level of apprehension felt by T.O.C.s or the cause of the apprehension, the stress felt by a T.O.C. is detrimental to the classroom environment. They propose that the apprehension felt by T.O.C.s can be lessened if all the parties involved (T.O.C.s, regular teachers, and administrators) worked together to develop extensive in-service programs, improve communication, and encourage T.O.C.s to work only in areas of compentency.

In a brief article intended to offer administrators in the U.S. assistance in improving T.O.C. efficiency, Warren (1988) outlines some concerns/apprehensions held by T.O.C.s. His views seem to be largely derived from personal observation but in light of some of the literature discussed so far, he raises some valid issues. Warren recognizes characteristics of T.O.C. teaching consistent with the findings of Clifton and Rambaran
(1987), Friedman (1983), Bontempo and Deay (1986), and Johnson, Holcombe, and Vance (1988). Warren adds that a great deal of T.O.C. anxiety is due to uncertainty about the T.O.C. role in a school or classroom:

Role expectations are ambiguous and substitutes are torn between the dichotomy of faculty members wanting continuity with their programs and administrators wanting classroom management. Consequently, substitutes strive to meet both sets of expectations while being all too aware of their low status within the system. (p. 97)

The Use of Narrative in T.O.C. literature

There are some examples of narrative as a form on inquiry in T.O.C. literature that can be included in this section as each example touches on concerns that seem to be shared by T.O.C.s in most educational systems. These stories and personal anecdotes put the researcher’s conclusions into a human perspective and help us remember that when dealing with T.O.C.s, we are ultimately dealing with people. Stewart (1991) worked as a T.O.C. in British Columbia when he wrote:

You think your pay stinks. If I’m lucky, I’ll work ten days a month, for eight months (September is slow, and June is short) at a little over a $100 a day. You work it out. I have, and I’m still living with Mom. Still, the biggest problem I encounter as a sub is my invisibility. Being a teacher on call can be a lonely job. How often do you see a sub eating his or her lunch alone in a quiet corner of the staffroom? Unless I’ve worked at a school quite a few times, which is uncommon, no one knows me. I rarely get to share in the conversations between students or even between teachers. The kids grow up, mature, become individuals – some even blossom under the guidance of a good teacher. I don’t get to see that. (p. 7)

While Stewart is a certified B.C. teacher working as a T.O.C., the following excerpts from Aceto (1995) are from a college engineering graduate in the U.S. who is unemployed and tries T.O.C. employment.

The assistant principal greets me warmly and assures me the day will go smoothly. “Just follow your instructions, and everything will be fine,” she says. Sure, I think. Piece of cake. (p. 490)
I can see the realization dawning on them (the students) that what they have here is a rare bird, indeed: a substitute teacher – and a man, to boot. This guy is fresh meat. The class quickly reaches a silent consensus today is a good day for raising some hell. (p. 490)
The insignificant events of this, my first day in elementary education, are just sampling of business as usual. I am now doubly impressed by the commitment and talents required of full-time teachers. (p. 492)

Nixon (1994) presents a scene that is not unlike the school in the novel The Blackboard Jungle. Interestingly, Nixon, who is Canadian, worked as a T.O.C. in Louisianna after completing his doctorate in curriculum. Some of his reflections include:

I determined I would be cheerful but firm, just as we had been directed to do by the relentlessly optimistic principal who was chief speaker at the substitute teachers’ orientation. “Oh, they’ll test you,” the pretty black woman had said shaking her finger, “but, remember, these are people, too. You don’t know what they’ve been through outside of school. Greet them at the door as if they mattered.” I found the little classroom, unlocked the door, and took up my position as greeter. (p. 2)

Now, after much subbing in both middle and high schools, I’ve come to realize that precious little is being learned of any consequence in schools. (p. 4)

Those inside the system feel only their hostility rising as children must submit to an out-dated scheme and adults are called to enforce this scheme without the power to do so. How can anyone see the clouds while hunkered down in the smoke-filled trenches? (p. 5)

Nixon’s work as a T.O.C. has certainly challenged his earlier views of public schooling and points to more serious problems challenging schools. Perhaps his views would be different if he was able to teach as a regular classroom teacher rather than as a T.O.C.

Addressing T.O.C. issues at the school/district level

A majority of the literature regarding T.O.C. teaching can be classified, in my opinion, as “How to” articles. These articles tend to focus on practical steps for the individual T.O.C. to increase T.O.C. effectiveness in the classroom, or on T.O.C.
programs that schools and districts could implement. The majority of these articles are based on personal observation and are anecdotal in nature.

As previously noted, Dendwick (1993) finds that literature in the field of T.O.C. teaching is sparse and this is especially evident in Canadian literature. Differences between the Canadian and American education systems concerning T.O.C.s are apparent as most Canadian T.O.C.s, unlike their U.S. counterparts, are graduates of teacher education programs (Dendwick, 1993). American districts and schools find it difficult to attract qualified, certified T.O.C.s (Abdall-Haqq, 1997; Augustin, 1987; Brace, 1990; Drake, 1981; Koelling, 1983; Peck & Rice, 1997; Peterson, 1991; Purvis & Garvey, 1993; St. Michel, 1995; Simmons, 1991; Stevens, 1969; Tracy, 1988; Wescott Dodd, 1989; Wilson, 1999) and requirements for T.O.C.s differ from state to state. For example, Florida and Georgia require at least high school graduation, Kansas requires two years of college, while Iowa and Oregon require college graduation and teacher preparation for T.O.C.s (Wescott Dodd, 1989).

As Dendwick (1993) has indicated, T.O.C.s in Canada may be better prepared. In British Columbia, Section 19 of the School Act reads:

Teacher and administrative officer qualifications
19. (1) Subject to subsection (2), a board shall not employ a person as a teacher, administrative officer, superintendent of schools or assistant superintendent of schools unless that person (a) is a member of the college and holds a certificate of qualification as a teacher, or (b) holds a letter of permission to teach issued under section 25(3) of the Teaching Profession Act.
(2) A board may employ a person who possesses qualifications approved by the board but does not meet the requirements of subsection (1), if that person is (a) employed for 20 or fewer consecutive teaching days and teaching a particular class or classes where no teacher holding a certificate of qualification is available, or (b) instructing a general interest course that is not leading to school graduation.

The B.C. Teachers Federation states that an implication of Section 19 is:
1. School boards must first hire certificated teachers on call for substitute duties. In some school districts, there are two lists of T.O.C.s: certificated and non-certificated. Teachers on the certificated list must be called first before the non-certificated list is considered. (B.C.T.F., 1993 p. 15)

It is widely noted that in order to address and perhaps alleviate various apprehensions that negate a T.O.C.'s effectiveness (Dendwick, 1993; Johnson, Holcombe, & Vance, 1988; St. Michel, 1995), schools and districts need to establish programs to support T.O.C.s (Abdall-Haqq, 1997; Brace, 1990; Calkins, 1989; Drake, 1981; Koelling, 1983; McHugh, 1998; Peck & Rice, 1997; Peterson, 1991; Purvis & Garvey, 1993; Stevens, 1969; Wilson, 1999). There are numerous aspects of these T.O.C. programs that surface in the literature and this frequency indicates areas of practical importance. At this point, it may be pertinent to focus on patterns that emerge in these articles rather than deal with each article individually.

Initially, there is a concern expressed in many of the articles that T.O.C. programs have remained relatively unchanged for several decades. Referring to T.O.C. programs, Stevens (1969) outlines her concerns thirty years ago:

One area of our educational structure has kept little pace with our changing world and has maintained its antiquated status despite the many innovations around it, i.e. the substitute teacher program. The typical substitute teacher program today remains loosely organized, inefficient, and ineffective... the substitute teacher has been viewed as a stop-gap, emergency measure, used as a baby-sitter, and relegated to the outer limits of the school staff. (p. 229)

increasing the role of district and school administrators in establishing T.O.C. programs, of improving communication between regular teachers and T.O.C.s, providing in-service training for T.O.C.s, improving the quality of lesson plans left for T.O.C.s, including T.O.C.s in school activities, providing meaningful evaluation and feedback for T.O.C.s, and in providing a regular teacher contact while the T.O.C. is in the school. The single most important practical item that can be provided for a T.O.C. appears to be a handbook that outlines the school’s procedures, policies, and physical design. It is felt that this handbook provides more information for the T.O.C. and consequently, the T.O.C. feels he/she has more authority in the school. The production of a handbook by schools for T.O.C.s would help reduce the marginalization of T.O.C.s as reported by Clifton and Rambaran (1987) but, given the nature of a typical day for a T.O.C., I wonder when a T.O.C. would find time to read the handbook.

Various school districts have illustrated their own T.O.C. programs in articles and have indicated aspects of these programs that have proved successful. These districts have implemented many of the initiatives mentioned earlier but stress unique aspects of their own programs. The Alhambra School District in Phoenix, Arizona (Peck & Rice, 1997) refers to T.O.C.s as guest teachers, has instituted a three-tier salary schedule based on days worked, and provides formal evaluations for guest teachers. An interesting situation within the district is that all certified district office administrators work as T.O.C.s for at least one day a year. Not surprisingly, perhaps because the superintendent could be a teacher’s next T.O.C., the quality of lesson plans left by regular teachers has improved dramatically.
Peck and Rice also recognize that there is a cost saving measure involved with office administrators working as T.O.C.s in the district. Rosborough, Sherbine, and Miller (1993) indicate that the Chesterfield County School District in South Carolina also utilizes school district staff to T.O.C. during the school year. Both the Alhambra and Chesterfield districts outline that district staff work as T.O.C.s to supplement a short supply of T.O.C.s. Calkins (1989) indicates that the Highline School District near Seattle, Washington also uses district administrators as T.O.C.s. Administrators teach as T.O.C.s in this case primarily as a means of reducing T.O.C. costs for the district.

In light of the progress made by some districts in establishing a T.O.C. program, there are two important points that I feel need to be addressed as T.O.C. programs are established or reformed in school districts. Rawson (1981), like other authors, indicates practical steps that should be undertaken to improve T.O.C. effectiveness. Rawson stresses that in order for T.O.C. programs to be successful in the long term, administrators, regular teachers, and T.O.C.s must clarify their role expectations relating to T.O.C. teaching. Rawson indicates that if administrators and regular teachers stress behavior management over educational continuity, then T.O.C. teaching will continue to lack professional satisfaction for the T.O.C. In addition, Nidds and McGerald (1994), St. Michel (1995), and Stevens (1969) support the use of permanent or regular T.O.C. teachers in specific schools in a district. By assigning regular T.O.C.s to schools, it is argued that the T.O.C.s would become more familiar with the school and consequently, teaching effectiveness would increase in the absence of the regular teacher. St. Michel (1995), based on a cost analysis of T.O.C. employment in a U.S. school district, contends that it could actually save T.O.C. costs in districts to hire permanent T.O.C.s for specific
schools. These views are consistent with the assertions of Clifton and Rambaran (1987) and Friedman (1983).

Not all are convinced that perpetuating the use of T.O.C.s in schools, regardless of potential reforms, is worthwhile. Deutchman (1983) pulls no punches when she states:

In order to reverse all this uncertainty and all the negative aspects which have long been associated with substitutes, we must simply refute the notion that it is possible for someone to come in and substitute for the absent teacher. When the teacher is absent, it simply is not a day for business as usual. By this time, we might as well admit it. (p. 397)

Deutchman goes on to outline steps to establish a “guest teacher program” (p. 397) that eventually enlists individuals from the community to prepare special presentations beforehand that they can present to the class in the event of a teacher absence. Deutchman overlooks aspects of reality such as wages for “guest teachers”, potential contractual disagreements, state and district requirements for T.O.C. certification, and the long term effects of effectively removing T.O.C.s from the district. For example, such a program does not address the need for extended T.O.C. placements in the case of long-term absences by teachers. Even the title of her article, “Why Settle for a Substitute?”, could be interpreted as demeaning to T.O.C.s.

**Issues relating to the individual T.O.C.**

Friedman (1983) suggests that the skills required of a T.O.C. are different from those required of a regular teacher. Friedman describes T.O.C. teaching as “an extreme, speeded up form of regular teaching” (p. 114). Although a district or school may have an extensive T.O.C. program in place, a T.O.C. still ultimately needs to be prepared to work with a class or classes of unfamiliar students. A T.O.C. also needs to prepare himself/herself for the unknown aspects of a day in a school.
There is an abundance of “self help” books and articles that are designed to help the T.O.C. prepare for the uncertainty of the day ahead. The underlying theme of the literature in this area seems to be that the T.O.C. is walking into a potential firestorm and the more resources one has, the better the chance of survival.

McKay (1991) uses humour, at least I hope she is being humorous as I have no other explanation for the nature of her article, in a narrative that provides words of advice for T.O.C.s. Her article is from a U.S. perspective:

From time to time, one reads of amazing feats of survival that a person has performed all alone under terrible conditions, in a hostile environment, among savages, in bleak circumstances, near wild animals, or perhaps at the hands of torturers. The steps the hero or heroine takes to keep body alive and spirit refreshed make fascinating reading. Yet one wonders if these brave souls could survive a day or even an hour in the role of substitute teacher in inner-city junior high and high schools, where physical harm is a possibility, theft is a certainty, and humiliation is one’s daily bread. (p. 331)

McKay paints a bleak picture of T.O.C. work in the U.S. The following excerpts illustrate McKay’s views on T.O.C. teaching:

The only tool the would-be heroine – most school teachers are female – can take with her as she passes through the classroom portal is an air of confidence equal to that of a professional gambler. (p.331)

The fact is that the regular teacher takes no interest in what the substitute does that day, and the classwork does not count in the student’s grades after all. (p. 331)

Unhappy teenagers (kids are often cruelly unhappy) need to be doing something with their hands in order to concentrate when a strange teacher’s presence creates an emotional undertow. (p. 331)

Psychologically, the substitute is prisoner to the students. (p. 332)

The student must think that she (the T.O.C.) is Mrs. Khan – Mrs. Gengis Khan. (p. 333)

Sometimes a face, wreathed in rococo smiles, makes the hours in someone else’s classroom bearable, though on the whole, substitute teaching is unpleasant,
unproductive, and unrewarding. One can survive, although being lost in Tierra del Fuego must appear to be preferable. (p. 333)

McKay does little to promote potential benefits for the T.O.C. and provides little concrete, positive advice for teachers working as T.O.C.s, whether in an inner-city school or not.

There is a glimmer of hope out there for T.O.C.s attempting to make their time in classrooms as rewarding as possible. Stanley (1991) outlines four basic principles that may help a T.O.C. create a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to effective instruction. The guidelines are; 1) Be prepared, that is, familiarize yourself as much as possible with the class and school; 2) Take charge of the class, that is, establish authority quickly; 3) Clarify your expectations about conduct; and 4) Communicate to the students the significance of maintaining learning.

Platt (1987) provides similar guidance for T.O.C.s in addressing areas that special education T.O.C.s should be aware of when entering a special education classroom. Platt’s objective is to address concerns that non-specialist T.O.C.s may have when covering a special education classroom. In this article, Platt raises an issue that Rose and Beattie (1986) and McHugh (1996) echo concerning T.O.C.s in special education settings. Rose and Beattie (1986) indicate that as the T.O.C. supply decreases in the U.S., the qualification requirements for special education T.O.C.s have also decreased. Consequently, few special education T.O.C.s have any special education background. McHugh (1996) writing from a Canadian perspective notes “So far the needs and concerns of substitute teachers in special needs classes have not been an area of concern. Neither has getting the most effective use of substitute teachers for special needs pupils” (p. 204).
In addition to issues raised by Platt (1987), Rose and Beattie (1986), and McHugh (1996) associated with T.O.C.s and special education classes, there may be legal implications of non-specialist T.O.C.s being employed in specialist teaching situations. In the litigious crazy U.S., Cotten (1995) has examined liability in school, primarily "the liability of the teacher, the administrator, and the school system... as it relates to actions by four additional categories of persons who are often serving within the school system. The four categories are: 1) substitute teachers, 2) teacher aides and other non-professionals, 3) student teachers or assistants, and 4) new or inexperienced teachers" (p. 71). Regarding substitutes (T.O.C.s), Cotten has summarized:

... the following principles seem to apply in situations involving the use of substitute teachers: 1) The substitute is held to the same standard of care as the regular teacher and may be held personally liable for his or her negligent acts. 2) When absent from school, the regular teacher has no supervisory duty toward the students and thus no liability. 3) When a substitute is present, the principal has the same supervisory duties to the students in his or her charge as when the regular teacher is present. These duties may entail more direction and closer supervision of a substitute than of a regular teacher. 4) The school district is liable for the negligent acts of a substitute to the same extent as it is liable for those of a regular teacher. (p. 72)

I do not intend to include a discussion of Cotten's (1995) findings in this section. However, in light of Platt's (1987) suggestions for assisting non-special education T.O.C.s and the subsequent concerns of Rose and Beattie (1986) and McHugh (1996), I feel that T.O.C.s need to develop an understanding that some assignments may not be appropriate from a professional perspective.

There are a number of handbooks available to T.O.C.s that are intended to provide a repertoire of activities for use in the classroom and to provide the T.O.C. with an overview of various realities associated with teaching as a T.O.C. For example, Pronin (1987) and Wescott Dodd (1989) are authors of T.O.C. handbooks that may be useful as a
resource for T.O.C.s who need to quickly fill in instructional times when guidelines from
the regular teacher are lacking. It is important to note that Pronin and Wescott Dodd are
American publications and sections on T.O.C. qualifications and classroom management
skills reflect the differences that may exist between T.O.C.s in the U.S and Canada.

The B.C. Teachers Federation (1993) has produced an extensive handbook for
teachers on call in B.C. that gives an overview of T.O.C. teaching in B.C. This document
is a very useful resource for potential T.O.C.s in B.C. as it covers topics ranging from ‘A
Day in the Life of a T.O.C.’, to T.O.C.s and collective agreements, to helpful tips in the
classroom, and job search strategies.

McHugh (1998) moves beyond the daily classroom challenges that are faced by
T.O.C.s and indicates that T.O.C.s can work to maintain and improve the professional
status for T.O.C.s in the schools and districts in which they teach. McHugh feels that no
other educational authority will take T.O.C.’s issues to heart so it is up to T.O.C.s
themselves to improve their professional status. McHugh suggests that T.O.C.s talk to
teachers and administrators about professional development, wages and benefits, and
authority in schools. T.O.C.s are encouraged to become pro-active in local teacher’s
associations and to increase their awareness of the professional responsibilities as a
T.O.C.

**Political issues regarding T.O.C. employment**

It has been an eye-opening experience to read examples of editorial comment and
complaints from T.O.C.s about issues relating to T.O.C. employment in provincial
teacher association publications. There is a consistency in these articles as all are
concerned with the professional standing and treatment of T.O.C.s. McHugh (1998) calls
for T.O.C.s to be directly involved in maintaining and strengthening their position as professionals in the school system. If the items featured in provincial teacher publications are an indication, T.O.C.s have a great deal of work to do.

Examples of professional concerns for T.O.C.s include: a plea to colleagues in Manitoba to recognize that T.O.C.s are not “solely responsible for all the inadequacies of the present system for handling teacher absences” (Vaughan, 1988, p. 10); charges that hiring practices in Alberta discriminate against T.O.C.s (de Luna, 1990, p.7); complaints in Alberta that T.O.C.’s professional rights regarding teaching loads are abused (McMullen, 1996, p. 4); and in B.C., a conflict simmers between the B.C. Teachers Federation and the B.C. Public School Employers’ Association about the eligibility of T.O.C.s for summer Employment Insurance benefits (Amsden, 1998, p. 5). The examples illustrate the on-going pursuit of T.O.C.s to achieve a degree of professional equality with other members of the teaching profession.

McHugh (1998) conducted a survey of 259 educators in southern Alberta that asked the question: Do T.O.C.s enjoy equal professional status with the regular teachers they replace? McHugh’s findings suggest that T.O.C.s do not enjoy equal professional status with regular teachers. She explains that T.O.C.s feel principals and regular teachers do not promote respect of T.O.C.s in schools, that regular teachers do not give T.O.C.s credit for teaching abilities, that T.O.C.s feel isolated in schools and unwelcome in staffrooms, and that principals and regular teachers feel that T.O.C.s should not receive a salary based on experience. McHugh concludes that in southern Alberta T.O.C.s do not enjoy the same professional status as regular teachers. This may be due somewhat to T.O.C.s perceiving their position as a step to permanent employment and
consequently, issues related to their employment are neglected. The result is, as indicated by Clifton and Rambaran (1987), that T.O.C. teaching remains on the “periphery of teaching and its professional status” (McHugh, 1998, p. 102).

Fodor (1990) utilizes T.O.C. salary information as a means to illustrate how he feels T.O.C.s are undervalued in B.C. At the time of Fodor’s article, labour practices were altered in B.C. by provincial legislation and one result was that T.O.C.s became a part of the collective agreement in local school districts. Fodor argues that it was time to stress equal working conditions and wages for T.O.C.s in B.C.

Fodor (1990) analyzed T.O.C. wages across B.C. and found that the average daily T.O.C. wage for a secondary level teacher (Teacher Qualification Service Level 5 or TQS 5) was $116.35 a day with the top being $164 a day and the lowest at $91 a day. This represented an 80% discrepancy between the top and bottom wage scales. Comparing this to the wages for a regular TQS 5 teacher (highest annual salary at $52,798 and the lowest rate at $48,156), Fodor found that the provincial wage range for a TQS 5 T.O.C. is six times as large as the range for a regular TQS 5 teacher. There was much less consistency in the range scale for T.O.C.s in B.C. compared to the wage scale for regular teachers. The B.C.T.F. Resource Book for Teachers on Call (1993) indicates that wage levels for T.O.C.s in B.C. have increased since Fodor’s (1990) article. However, the discrepancy between the top and bottom wage scales still exists.

Fodor (1990) also explains that many non-wage issues such as access to benefits, service recognition, number of consecutive working days required to reach scale (i.e., paid as a regular teacher at experience level), and access to professional development were handled with little consistency between school districts. He sees no apparent
reasons such as demographics or geographical limitations to explain the inconsistencies. Fodor concludes his argument with three personal views: 1) District administrators undervalue the significance of T.O.C.s; 2) Local teacher associations place a low priority on T.O.C. issues; and 3) T.O.C.s find themselves in a “job ghetto” relative to regular teachers (p. 16).

Campbell, Erickson, and Fodor (1995) argue that the means used across B.C. for dispatching T.O.C. assignments contravenes B.C.T.F. principles, threatens teacher solidarity, and “results in the ghettoization of T.O.C.s” (p. 11). This is an interesting argument as it challenges some of the traditional practices used to dispatch T.O.C.s in B.C. Campbell, Erickson and Fodor indicate that when teachers request specific T.O.C.s, referred to as the name-dispatch system, the teacher effectively becomes the T.O.C. employer. In this system, a T.O.C. is denied employment by classroom teachers when the T.O.C. is not requested. The name-dispatch system raises contractual and ethical questions. An alternative dispatch system is the rotational dispatch system which is based on an alphabetical list and qualifications. Campbell, Erickson, and Fodor outline that rotational dispatch is effectively forced job-sharing, regardless of years of experience, and “will consequently share the resulting poverty [among T.O.C.s] during low demand periods” (p. 11). Campbell, Erickson, and Fodor argue that both dispatch systems are inappropriate and must be dealt with as a provincial bargaining issue rather than on a local level. They conclude that T.O.C. dispatch based on qualifications and seniority is the only acceptable proposal.

There are positive signs for the professional standing of T.O.C.s. Schefernack, Vanderlinde, and Gilliss (1985) feel that in Saskatchewan the status of T.O.C.s was
improving and that special attention was being paid to employment structures and benefits. They attribute this to a growing number of younger T.O.C.s who are actively seeking regular full-time employment. This item suggests that a demographic shift was occurring in Saskatchewan as younger, more career motivated T.O.C.s were changing the face of the occupation. McMahen (1998) reports that T.O.C.s in Saskatchewan will now benefit from an amendment to the Saskatchewan Teachers Retirement Plan that makes the pension plan for T.O.C.s more equitable. The Saskatchewan Teachers Federation will also investigate how T.O.C.s might be included in the services and benefits available to regular S.T.F. members.

In Nanaimo, B.C., working with the Nanaimo District Teachers Association, the T.O.C. Issues Steering Committee works to organize T.O.C.s within the Nanaimo district. Bigler (1991) outlines how the Steering Committee works to support T.O.C.s in professional, political, and social instances.

These examples are evidence of increased professional lobbying for improvement in conditions of employment for T.O.C. teachers.

T.O.C. Teaching and Pre-Service Teacher Education

You were introduced to Too-Tall, Barry, Brother, and Freddy as they prepared for a T.O.C. named Ms. Barr. I'm sure you have been wondering how Ms. Barr has fared in the face of everything Too-Tall and the cubs would throw at her. We've witnessed the paper airplane trick. Let's pick up the story again for a short time. Ms. Barr was doing a video presentation when Too-Tall and The Gang managed to dump a bucket of water onto her. Ms. Barr turned off the VCR and exited the class, dripping water as she left.
One of Ms. Barr's allies in the class, Bertha, decides to take control of the situation herself:

Bertha marched back to the VCR. She fast-forwarded the tape to the end of the Great Grizzly National Park section. There on the screen was someone dressed in full karate uniform. And that someone was putting on a demonstration of karate moves and kicks.

"Cool," said Too-Tall. "And I'll bet Ms. Barr wasn't even going to show us this part."

"Shut up and watch, Too-Tall," said Bertha.

The cubs stared. They were fascinated by the rapid-fire movements of the karate expert. The demonstrator cut a wooden plank in half with one blow.

"Wow!" said Skuzz. "That board never had a chance."

The demonstrator smashed a pile of bricks to dust.

"Holy smokes!" cried Smirk.

The demonstrator tossed, threw, and slammed to the mat a series of big, burly fellows.

"Ouch," said Too-Tall. "I sure hope I never meet her in a dark alley." Wait a minute thought Too-Tall. HER? He leaned forward for a closer look. Just as he did so, the home-video camera zoomed in for a closeup of the demonstrator's face. It was indeed a "she". And not just any old "she".

"Holy cow!" cried Too-Tall. "It's MS. BARR!"

The class let out one big gasp. Bertha switched off the VCR and turned on the lights. No one made a sound as she walked slowly to the front of the classroom.

"You're exactly right, Too-Tall," said Bertha softly. "That was Ms. Barr giving a demonstration at Bruinville School. She was celebrating her new black belt in karate."

"Wow!" said Barry Bruin. "Ms. Barr is a BLACK BELT!"

"Well Too-Tall, what do you think?" asked Bertha with a big smile.

Too-Tall sank down in his chair. He felt as if his bones were all turning to jelly.

"What do I think?" he whined. "I...er...think you should have told me about it before I dropped a bucket of water on Ms. Barr's head." He was angry. "Why didn't you SAY something, Bertha?" (Berenstain, 1993 p. 90-93)

It may not be appropriate to include martial arts training in the curriculum of teacher education programs, although on some days T.O.C.s may wish they had those skills.

The relationship between the requirements of T.O.C. teaching and pre-service teacher education programs is largely ignored in T.O.C. literature. This situation may be a result of the relatively low priority that the education community places on the T.O.C.'s role in schools. Wescott Dodd (1989) includes this comment early in her T.O.C.
handbook: “You may be surprised to learn that common sense and the ability to get along with children are more important for substitute teaching than teacher training” (p. 3). Nidds and McGerald (1994) observe in their discussion of T.O.C.s that “the beleaguered substitute teachers, in some cases neophytes preparing for careers in education, are routinely subjected to exhausting and demoralizing experiences” (p. 25). Taken together, these two statements imply that graduates of teacher education programs may not be adequately prepared to work as T.O.C.s. In Canada, Parsons and Dillon (1978) gave pre-service teachers an opportunity to express their thoughts about T.O.C. teaching and of the students’ responses, 58% of the comments about T.O.C. work were negative. These comments were from pre-service teachers! Parsons and Dillon (1978) explain the students teachers’ negative perceptions:

Substitute teaching is probably the worst of teaching. It has all the frustrations and none of the rewards. Except for those who sub for longer periods, substitute teachers never get to know their students, nor they him. In short, a substitute teacher is a care-taker, a baby-sitter, who never fills a real role in the students’ lives. (p. 6)

Parsons and Dillon (1978) feel that it is important for teacher education programs to address T.O.C. teaching with student teachers for several reasons including T.O.C. work is a route to full-time employment, T.O.C. work offers a wide range of experiences for the new teacher, T.O.C.s can experiment with a variety of teaching methods in that particular role, and that T.O.C. work should not be a worthless waste of time (p. 6).

As a means to provide their pre-service teachers with a T.O.C. experience, Parsons and Dillon had student teachers prepare to have a fellow student teacher work as a T.O.C. in his/her class during the end of the practicum period. Effectively, all student teachers with Parsons and Dillon exchanged classes for a day. In addition to preparing to have a T.O.C. enter their class, each student teacher had to prepare to enter a classroom
as a T.O.C. Discussions with pre-service teachers after the T.O.C. experience indicated that although the experience caused a great deal of anxiety for the student teachers, it was an extremely valuable experience for beginning teachers.

In the U.S., Soares (1988) outlines an internship program that utilizes T.O.C. teaching as the field experience for training teachers. Students who chose the internship program rather the regular teacher education program were graduate students who took professional courses in the evenings and on weekends and worked as T.O.C.s for the year under the guidance of university and school personnel. In this instance, students were permitted to T.O.C. and were paid by the school district but they were not permitted to remain in one class longer that 15 consecutive school days due to legal restrictions. Soares indicates that pre-service teachers who had completed the interning program were found to have higher self-perceptions and higher performance ratings than graduates of more traditional programs. Soares also points out that the intern program helped more graduates move into full-time positions compared to graduates from other programs. My concern with the internship program described by Soares is that if T.O.C. skills and regular teaching skills are significantly different (Friedman, 1983), then the internship graduates may be lacking some expertise when they eventually have their own classes. Perhaps the district that worked with Soares’ interns saw the internship program as an opportunity to find a supply of relatively efficient T.O.C.s.

There is evidence in the literature that calls for addressing T.O.C. teaching in pre-service teacher education. Augustin (1987) indicates:

Even though the substitute teacher may be completely qualified for teaching, substitute work requires a somewhat different approach. Therefore, undergraduate programs should include procedures for substitute teaching. These
programs should promote the concept that substitutes are interdisciplinary resource people who have more to offer than babysitting skills. (p. 393)

Bontempo and Deay (1986) echo the view of Augustin:

With increasing numbers of substitutes in the schools and many beginning teachers starting their careers as substitutes, it is imperative for teacher educators, administrators, and regular classroom teachers to be concerned about the preparation of substitute teachers. (p. 89)

In addition to Augustin (1987) and Bontempo and Deay (1986), authors including Ostapczuk (1994), Parsons and Dillon (1978), and Soares (1988) call for measures to address T.O.C. teaching in pre-service teacher education. It appears that Parsons and Dillon, and Soares are in the minority in addressing T.O.C. teaching directly in teacher education programs. It must also be pointed out that these examples are from at least ten years ago and there is little evidence of teacher education programs in the late 1990s that address T.O.C. teaching in a formal, meaningful manner.

Below I provide a snapshot, albeit brief, of pre-service teacher education and T.O.C. teaching in a Canadian and B.C. context from three informal conversations with individuals who are involved in teacher education or are recent graduates of a teacher education program. I contacted Rena Upitis, Dean of the School of Education at Queen's University in Ontario and asked if there was any discussion as part of the pre-service program at Queen's that addresses work as a T.O.C. Her response indicated that the present employment situation in Ontario may play a role in the pre-service teacher education program at Queen's:

Thanks for writing. Interesting question – in fact, we don’t spend a lot of time discussing the substitute teacher role, partly because people are getting jobs left, right, and center these days! But it’s definitely worth thinking about for future years. (Rena Upitis, personal communication, May 27, 1999)
I asked the same question to two Richmond, B.C. School District T.O.C.s who are graduates of the University of B.C. Secondary 12 Month Teacher Education Program.

L.B.: In your opinion, was there any formal recognition of working as a T.O.C. [in your teacher education program]?

T.O.C. 1: No. There was nothing that appeared as part of methods etc. Sometimes, during projects or presentations, someone would say “Try this if you’re stuck while subbing.” The instructor might comment occasionally that so and so’s idea would be helpful if you were subbing. But nothing that was “official”. (Personal communication, May 28, 1999)

T.O.C. 2: No. Nothing appeared in courses for things like survival or generic lesson plans. I think addressing T.O.C. issues must occur as part of teaching principles. I don’t think you need a whole course but at least part of a course would work. (Personal communication, June 4, 1999)

It appears that although there is recognition that T.O.C. teaching may be significantly different than regular teaching (Clifton & Rambaran, 1987; Friedman, 1983) and that pre-service teacher education programs should address T.O.C. teaching issues (Augustin, 1987; Bontempo & Deay, 1986; Ostapczuk, 1994; Parsons & Dillon, 1978; and Soares, 1988), very little is being done in the area.

**Summary of the current status of T.O.C.s and T.O.C. teaching**

Few job descriptions are more challenging and enduring than that of teachers. One profession that can rival the frustrations felt by many of today’s teacher’s may be that of the substitute teacher...A substitute faces many of the same hardships as his or her permanent counterpart in addition to various unique confrontations that make the job especially difficult. (Warren, 1988, p. 96)

Employment as a T.O.C. may require skills and practices that differ significantly from the requirements of a regular teacher (Friedman, 1983; Warren, 1988). The transient, temporary nature of T.O.C. teaching limits the ability of T.O.C.s to legitimate themselves in the classroom and consequently, forces T.O.C.s to function in a marginal situation or on the periphery of the school system (Clifton & Rambaran, 1987; McHugh
Anxiety and apprehensions about teaching as a T.O.C. may detract from the classroom effectiveness of T.O.C.s (Johnson, Holcombe, & Vance, 1988) as T.O.C.s are torn between focusing on behavior management of students, or maintaining instructional continuity in the classroom (Drake, 1981; Warren, 1988). Contributing further to potentially frustrating teaching experiences for T.O.C.s is the apparent lack of support for T.O.C.s in schools from district administration, school administration, and regular staff (Augustin, 1987; Bontempo & Deay, 1986; Drake, 1981; Drury, 1988; Frosch, 1984; Johnson, Holcombe, & Vance, 1988; McHugh, 1998; Warren, 1998).

Much of the focus of T.O.C. attention, especially in the U.S., is on recruiting, training, and maintaining a pool of T.O.C.s that are able to make effective use of classroom time (Brace, 1990; Drury, 1988; Nidds & McGerald, 1994; Rosborough, Sherbine, & Miller, 1993; Wilson, 1999). In the U.S., T.O.C. requirements are varied and in some states, the minimum requirement is a high school diploma (Wescott Dodd, 1984). Dendwick (1993) outlines the apparent differences between T.O.C. teachers in Canada and the U.S. as Canadian T.O.C.s tend to be qualified teachers. In a few instances in Canada, some T.O.C.s may not be qualified teachers but this situation occurs primarily in rural areas where T.O.C. numbers are low (McMahen, 1999).

Historically, the basic system of using T.O.C.s for absent teachers has changed little in past decades. Stevens (1969) and Drake (1981) recognize that the use of T.O.C.s is still antiquated while reforms in other areas of education have moved forward. Professionally and politically, T.O.C.s are dealing with a variety of issues including wage equity (Fodor, 1990), pension equity (McMahen, 1999), professional regard (McHugh, 1998) and the methods in place for dispatching T.O.C.s to schools (B.C.T.F., 1993;
Campbell, Erickson, & Fodor, 1995). Progress in resolving many T.O.C. issues is often very slow as T.O.C.s who are politically involved may receive full time appointments and consequently, their professional priorities change (Bigler, 1991) or T.O.C.s may neglect aspects of improving their professional standing as T.O.C. employment is viewed as a temporary step to full time employment (McHugh, 1998).

Although there appears to be little focus on T.O.C. teaching in pre-service education programs (Upitis, personal communication, 1999; T.O.C. 1 & T.O.C. 2, personal communication, 1999), there is a widespread feeling of the need to include T.O.C. teaching in teacher education programs (Ostapczuk, 1994; Parsons & Dillon, 1978, and Soares, 1988). The need for discussion and an awareness of the requirements of T.O.C. teaching in teacher education programs is obvious as many new teachers are using T.O.C. employment as a means to secure a full time teaching appointment (B.C.T.F., 1993; de Luna, 1990; Nidds & McGerald, 1994; Ostapczuk, 1994; Parsons & Dillon, 1978; Pronin, 1983; Scefernack, Vanderlinde, & Gilliss, 1985; Soares, 1988; Wescott Dodd, 1984). In light of the T.O.C. literature reviewed for this study, new teachers may be facing situations as T.O.C.s that they are not prepared for and these experiences may be largely negative in nature, frustrating to T.O.C.s, and ultimately demoralizing. In discussions cited earlier with the two new teachers who were employed as T.O.C.s, T.O.C. 2 expressed a concern that goes to the heart of the T.O.C. situation for new teachers: “I feel that a gap exists. You’re trained as a teacher and then you work as a T.O.C. I’m worried that the longer I T.O.C., the more skills I lose from the program and the harder it will be to start for real in my own classroom.” (Personal communication, June 4, 1999)
Further attention and research into aspects of the T.O.C. situation is paramount. If new teachers are going to find themselves teaching as T.O.C.s before securing regular employment, efforts must be made to ensure that the T.O.C. experience can be as professionally meaningful and productive as possible for districts, teachers, T.O.C.s, and students.
CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions of the T.O.C. experience from the perspectives of beginning secondary teachers who are employed as T.O.C.s. This chapter will describe the context of the study, introduce the participants, and address the design of the study.

The Context of the Study

The study is centred in the Richmond School District #38, Richmond, B.C. It is important to note that while pseudonyms have been used for other school districts, schools, the participants, and teachers, the Richmond School District has granted approval for the study to be conducted in the district and is aware of the nature of the study [Appendix A]. Consequently, the Richmond School District is identified throughout the study. The Richmond School District is comprised of forty-one elementary schools [Grades K - 7] with about 13,284 students and ten secondary schools [Grades 8 - 12] with approximately 10,862 students. The Richmond District employs an administrative staff of 130, a teaching staff of 2,050 [including T.O.C.s and teachers on leave], and a non-teaching staff of 900 (Richmond School District #38, p. 3). The study also incorporates the experiences of the participants while they are T.O.C. teaching in other metropolitan school districts near Richmond.

Design of the Study

Theoretical Perspective

People elect to pursue a teaching career for a variety of reasons. Consequently, teachers who are employed as T.O.C.s may have various reasons or motivations for teaching as T.O.C.s. Some T.O.C.s may find that securing a regular teaching position is
difficult and T.O.C. teaching is an economic necessity until a regular teaching appointment is attained. Others may view T.O.C. teaching as an opportunity to further prepare for a career as a regular teacher. Still others may find that T.O.C. teaching allows them to work part time while raising a family. There may be T.O.C.s who view T.O.C. employment as a negative situation while other T.O.C.s feel the experience is enlightening and generally positive. It is plausible that T.O.C.s will have different perspectives of the T.O.C. experience. The constructivist paradigm argues that “individuals through their own mental activity, experience with the environment and social interactions progressively build up and restructure their schemes of the world around them” (Driver, 1989, p. 5). Given the nature of the research focus, the constructivist paradigm underlies the design of the study. A constructivist approach is necessary as the participants of the study personally construct their perceptions of T.O.C. teaching as they begin their teaching careers.

Constructions, as related to a teacher’s experience of T.O.C. teaching are based on both the personal construction of meaning by experiencing T.O.C. teaching and on the social construction of meaning by engaging in discourse with other T.O.C.s, regular teachers, administration, support staff, and students. Lincoln and Guba indicate:

Realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature, ... and dependent for their form and context on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions .... Constructions are alterable, as are their associated “realities”. (Lincoln and Guba, 1994, p. 109 - 110)

As the study’s participants, and T.O.C.s in general, experience T.O.C. teaching in a variety of contexts and interpret their experiences in a manner that is personally relevant, their personal and social constructions of T.O.C. teaching may differ.
Research focus

The study was guided by the research focus: Given the nature of T.O.C. employment and how the demands of T.O.C. teaching may differ from the demands of regular teaching, the study will explore perceptions of the nature of T.O.C. teaching held by beginning secondary teachers who are employed as T.O.C.s.

Sampling

Prior to the recruitment of participants for the study, consent to conduct the study was granted by the Richmond School District #38 [Appendix A] and the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Once consent was granted, participants were recruited from orientation sessions provided by the Richmond School District for new teachers to the district on September 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 1999. These sessions were for new teachers to the Richmond District, with regular teachers and T.O.C.s in attendance. I addressed each of the two sessions and briefly outlined an overview of the study and invited interested teachers to participate.

Sampling for the study was purposive. The sampling criteria was: 1) teachers who are beginning their careers as secondary teachers\textsuperscript{2}; 2) teachers who are currently employed as T.O.C.s; and 3) teachers who have never held a regular or temporary long term teaching appointment.

Teachers who satisfied the sampling criteria and expressed interest in the study were given a letter of initial contact for the study that outlined the purpose and

\textsuperscript{2} In most cases, a beginning teacher would refer to a first year teacher who has only recently completed a teacher education program. However, for the purpose of the study, this also includes teachers who are in their second year of teaching as T.O.C.s after completing a teacher education program.
procedures for the study and assured confidentiality for the participants. At this time, potential participants indicated that it was permissible to discuss their participation by telephone. Five participants agreed to participate in the study by the end of September 1999. Informed consent forms were completed by the participants at the time of the first meeting with each participant. One participant later withdrew from the study in December 1999 as work and school coaching commitments were making interviews difficult to organize.

Researcher's Perspective

In this study, I was the only researcher involved in collecting and analyzing the data. I was also employed as a T.O.C. in the Richmond School District before receiving a continuing contract in 1993. My experiences as a T.O.C. have played a role in the design of the study, primarily in the development of interview questions. Consequently, my experiences overlap with those of the participants. Lincoln and Guba (1994) outline:

Indeed, the notion that findings are created through the interaction of inquirer and phenomenon (which in the social sciences, is usually people) is often a more plausible description of the inquiry process .... (p. 107)

I was employed as a T.O.C. when I began teaching in the Richmond School District in 1991. Previous to this, I had taught as a regular classroom teacher in another British Columbia school district and had taught overseas. Consequently, when I began in Richmond, I was found myself beginning anew as a T.O.C. Eventually, I received a regular teaching position in the Richmond School District.

My experiences as a T.O.C., and as a regular teacher, guided the construction of the interview questions, especially for the initial two interviews. I then relied primarily on the participants' responses in the construction of subsequent interview questions.
Participants

In order to provide a thorough description of the context of the study, each of the four participants will be briefly introduced. Pseudonyms have been used to protect their confidentiality. As outlined in the sampling criteria, all participants are secondary teachers.

Janet
Janet is a twenty-three old female. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree and completed her teacher education program in August 1999. Her teaching areas are primarily Science, specifically Biology, and Math. She currently T.O.C.s in Richmond and one other district.

Kerri
Kerri is a twenty-eight year old female. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in geography and a minor in history. Kerri completed her teacher education program in August 1999. Her teaching areas include Social Studies, Geography, and History. She T.O.C. teaches in Richmond and two other districts.

Ernie
Ernie is a twenty-six year old male and he has a Bachelor of Human Kinetics degree with a Social Studies minor. He completed his teacher education program in August 1999. His teaching areas are Physical Education and Social Studies. Ernie T.O.C. teaches in Richmond and one other district.

Lynn
Lynn is a twenty-five year old female with a Bachelor of Arts degree in French and History. She completed her teacher education program in 1998. She is also qualified to teach English as a Second Language. Lynn’s teaching areas include French, French Immersion, English as a Second Language, and Social Studies. She T.O.C. teaches in
Richmond and one other district, and has taught as a T.O.C. at a private secondary school in a district other than Richmond.

**Data Collection**

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews designed to provide “rich” descriptions of each participant’s perceptions of the T.O.C. experience. Merriam (1998) outlines that “Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” (p. 72). The use of interviews to collect data was also consistent with Merriam (1998) who states “Interviewing is also the best technique to use when conducting intensive case studies of a few selected individuals ....” (p. 72).

Semi-structured interviews were constructed to provide demographic information for each participant and to allow each participant to provide his/her own perceptions of the T.O.C. experience [Appendix B]. The use of semi-structured interviews was supported by Merriam (1998)

This format [semi-structured interviews] allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging world view of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic. (p. 74)

Each participant was interviewed a total of four times over a four month period from October 1999 to January 2000. Interviews were approximately forty minutes to an hour in length and were conducted at a time and place that was convenient for each participant. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Transcription included the researcher’s questions and the participants’ responses [Appendix C]. I utilized interpretations of preceding interviews to explore experiences and perceptions of T.O.C. teaching in upcoming interviews. Consequently, the
interviews were not perceived as separate events but were connected streams of thought. Participants were provided with the audio tapes of some of their interviews after transcription.

Data Analysis

The constant comparative method as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was used to derive themes from each T.O.C. and then to compare themes that emerged across T.O.C.s. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that their adaptation of Glaser and Strauss's constant comparative method focuses on "data processing activities" (p. 346) rather than "a means for deriving [grounding] theory" (p. 339). In their method of processing data, Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate that the researcher begins by "unitizing" (p. 334) units of data into provisional categories. These provisional categories will be a combination of categories constructed by the researcher and categories that emerge from the data. After unitizing, the researcher then follows several steps referred to as "categorizing" (p. 347). Through the process of categorizing, the researcher devises rules that describe the properties of categories and works toward a "reasonable" (p. 347) portrayal of the issues raised by the participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate that reasonable "is most easily defined as a judgement that might be made subsequently by an auditor reviewing the process" (p. 347). In light of the research focus and exploratory nature of the study, it was felt that the constant comparative method as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was an appropriate means for data analysis. The constant comparative method has become one of the most widely used approaches to data analysis for exploratory studies similar to the nature of this study.
In applying the principles of the constant comparative method to data analysis for the study, the researcher began by personally transcribing each interview to develop a deeper understanding of the participants and their responses. The transcribed interviews were then read and meaningful units of information were identified. When all interviews were read and units of information were identified, the units were categorized into numerous categories. Major categories evolved into common themes. A common theme was defined as a category that was evident with all four participants. In addition to common themes, other areas of importance were explored. These areas may not have been common among all participants but I felt it was important to provide an interpretation in light of the research focus.

**Establishing Validity and Reliability**

In determining the assessment of a qualitative study, Merriam (1998) outlines:

The applied nature of educational inquiry thus makes it imperative that researchers and others be able to trust the results of research - to feel confident that the study is valid and reliable. ... Thus appropriate standards need to be used for assessing validity and reliability. (p. 164-165)

In determining the extent that researchers can trust the findings of a qualitative case study, Merriam stresses that strategies need to be in place to address concerns specific to internal validity, reliability, and external validity.

**Internal Validity**

Merriam (1998) states that “Internal validity deals with the questions of how research findings match reality” (p. 201). However, the nature of qualitative research undertaken in the constructivist paradigm implies that reality is constructed over time through the interaction between the researcher and phenomenon, or T.O.C. participants in this study. The strategies employed in this study for establishing internal validity as
outlined by Merriam (1998) were long-term observation or data collection, member checks, and acknowledging researcher perspective.

Long-term observation or data collection contributes to internal validity by gathering data over an extended period of time. In this study, four interviews were held with each participant over a four month duration which contributed to the collection of “rich” descriptions of the T.O.C. experience. Member checks involved revisiting the data collected in previous interviews by discussing those interviews with the participants and by providing the participants with audio tapes after transcription of some interviews.

The researcher’s perspective was stated regarding the theoretical orientation of the study, the researcher’s perception of the T.O.C. situation through the introduction and literature review. In addition, it was stated that the researcher had been employed as a T.O.C. in the Richmond District and consequently, my views and perceptions were an integral aspect of the study and its design.

**Reliability**

Merriam (1998) states that

Reliability refers to the extent to which one’s findings can be replicated. … Reliability is problematic in the social sciences as a whole simply because human behaviour is never static. (p. 170)

Qualitative research does not strive to ensure that the same results will be determined in replicating a study. Rather, as explained by Merriam (1998), reliability in qualitative research offers that “a researcher wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense - they are consistent and dependable” (p. 206).

Providing a clear audit trail was the main strategy employed in ensuring reliability in the study. Essentially, other researchers should be able to follow the trail of research
from the sampling of participants, means of data collection, data analysis, and the establishment of common themes and important areas of the T.O.C. experience.

**External Validity**

Merriam (1998) describes external validity as being “concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. That is, how generalizable are the results of a research study?” (p. 207). The generalizability of this study was enhanced by employing a thematic analysis of the four T.O.C.s to determine common themes and areas of importance. Also, the context of the study was extensively outlined so that the reader will be able to determine the generalizability, or transferability, of the study to his/her context. Lastly, by providing “rich” descriptive accounts of the participants perceptions and experiences, the study provides the reader with the information necessary to determine if the study is generalizable to his/her context.

The T.O.C. themes and areas of importance are described in Chapter Four. The individual stories of the participants are interspersed throughout the description of the themes and areas of importance.
CHAPTER FOUR - RESULTS

The four participants’ experiences and perceptions of T.O.C. teaching are explored here in terms of practical aspects of T.O.C. teaching, common themes, and important areas of T.O.C. teaching. As outlined in Chapter Three, four semi-structured interviews were held with each participant over a four month period. Data analysis was based on the constant comparative method as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

This chapter begins by exploring participant definitions of T.O.C. teaching and outlining the practical day-to-day context of T.O.C. teaching for the participants. Data analysis lead to the identification of six common themes. The common themes represent perceptions that are common to all the participants. The common themes are explored in this chapter and are identified as:

1. Lack of T.O.C. familiarity with the teaching environment;
2. Lack of T.O.C. authority in schools;
3. Lack of credibility of the T.O.C. as a teacher;
4. Challenges with classroom management;
5. Indifferent treatment of T.O.C.s by regular teaching staff

The latter portion of the chapter explores important areas of T.O.C. teaching such as the participants’ reflections on how the T.O.C. experience and/or T.O.C. effectiveness could be improved, the positive aspects of the participants’ T.O.C. experience, and the participants’ perceived value of the T.O.C. experience.
Participant definitions of Regular teaching/T.O.C. teaching

Participants' definitions of a regular teacher and a T.O.C. revealed a disparity in roles played by each in the classroom and displayed an overview of specific issues that are central to T.O.C. teaching. When defining a regular teacher, Janet indicates that regular teachers not only work with students in an academic context, but that they also have an impact on a personal level with students:

Well, they're [regular teachers] supposed to help facilitate students. You know, there is this curriculum they're supposed to teach and essentially, they are supposed to help guide these students through this curriculum but at the same time they're supposed to help them develop their social skills and ... their personality. ... Spark their curiosity and get them to think creatively.

Ernie's view of a regular teacher supports Janet's assertion and further develops the theme that a regular teacher deals with students at a personal level and has a multifaceted relationship with students that goes beyond merely guiding them through the curriculum. Ernie implies that a regular teacher fills many roles in the lives of students when he provides this definition of a teacher:

Um, a facilitator of learning is probably best. People who help students maximize their potential and help them learn a variety of areas or tasks or subjects. Um, also teachers, there are so many, everything is wrapped up in a teacher. Teacher as a coach, as a role model, um, a friend .... Just sometimes, they are almost a parent, a big brother, big sister.

Lynn provides a similar view to Ernie's and Janet's:

I feel the teaching profession is a mixed bag of several professions and um, as I continue in this field longer just observing how some teachers interact with their students, you can see that it goes beyond the carrying out of the curriculum for the sake of passing an exam.

It is apparent that the role played by a regular teacher may impact student's lives beyond the academic level of the classroom. Regular teachers may influence students outside the physical setting of the classroom.
Participants appear to hold different definitions about what role a T.O.C. may play in the school setting. While recognizing that a T.O.C. is a teacher who replaces a regular teacher for a short term assignment, Kerri also recognizes that a T.O.C. is faced with challenges:

O.K., well I suppose that what I’d like it [T.O.C. definition] to be is that we’re just a teacher who gets called in as opposed to having a steady job. ... but the job is damage control. Because that’s all you do.

Janet reflects Kerri’s comment that a T.O.C. steps in to carry on for a regular teacher. However, she develops the concept introduced by Kerri that a T.O.C. is faced with many challenges in replacing a regular teacher. Janet also touches on the political correctness of the term T.O.C. rather than the use of ‘substitute’ when she defines a T.O.C.:

I guess somebody who is filling in. ... It’s just a substitute. Substitute is a perfect definition. I don’t see what the big problem is with that. ... You’re a substitute for the teacher because they’re not there, otherwise you wouldn’t even be there. ...I don’t think there is one single definition [for a T.O.C.] because you’re constantly in different roles. I mean, depending on what you teach, you’re just there as a supervisor, or babysitter, depending on what the teacher has left for you.

Janet’s comment that a T.O.C. is “constantly in different roles” is interesting in light of Ernie’s earlier statement that indicates a regular teacher plays many roles in dealing with students. It may be that the roles played by a regular teacher are determined by relationships with students while the roles played by a T.O.C. are determined by the challenges associated with replacing the regular teacher.

The definitions of a T.O.C. provided by the participants offer a glimpse into the various issues faced by T.O.C.s teaching in classrooms. In her definition of a T.O.C., Lynn alludes to T.O.C. teaching as a means to secure a regular teaching position, how the term T.O.C. presents a more professional image that using the term substitute, and she
also implies that the efforts and contributions of T.O.C.s may not be receiving the recognition she feels is deserved:

Um, the old term was substitute because you were taking the place of someone for a day or two. And now with the language changing to teacher on call, I guess personally I could say it sounded better. ... like a doctor on call or whatever. You’re a very needed person. That’s for sure. You know people are desperate to have you help them. Um, but how much gratitude you actually receive is another story. ... I guess something that could define it [a T.O.C.] is a person who is a teacher, who doesn’t hold a contract but is day to day in a different school fulfilling the role of the contracted teacher. I won’t even use regular or normal or whatever because we’re all equally qualified except one is holding a contract and the other isn’t....

Ernie is more blunt in his definition. His comments relate the managerial aspects of T.O.C. teaching and in that sense support Kerri’s view that “the job is damage control”. In addition, Ernie feels strongly that a T.O.C. makes very little impact on students while teaching in the place of the regular teacher:

T.O.C. would probably be, first thing, supervisor, a warm body, um, almost like a babysitter. That’s pretty much bang on because you don’t really make any type of, I don’t know, impact on students in that short of time. Basically, especially as a P.E. teacher, you come in, you say who you are, you say what you are going to do, and then you take attendance and then, you hopefully get the students working and motivated playing stuff. You’re monitoring, supervising.

Practical Context of T.O.C. teaching from the participants’ perspective

Balancing employment in more than one district

Each of the four participants in this study are employed as T.O.C.s in the Lower Mainland region of B.C. and work in two or three school districts simultaneously. Usually, this requires the T.O.C. to balance call-outs from each district to maximize the number of days they are employed. Janet outlines how she handles calls from two districts to ensure she has regular assignments:

Richmond asked yesterday if I could work tomorrow but I had already accepted a job in Rutherford. Normally, I’ll go to whichever one calls first.
Difficulties may arise if a T.O.C. works for two districts but finds that most assignments are for one district. Ernie explains his predicament when both Gore and Richmond were calling him for T.O.C. assignments for the same day:

Gore would phone after Richmond so Gore was always getting the brushoff. After about ten days of me getting regularly called for Richmond, Gore left me a message asking what was going on. Basically, I should have told them that Richmond phones first, they pay more, and I know the area. I told Gore that I had a temporary contract in Richmond just to get them off my back. I didn’t want to totally write off Gore.

Janet and Ernie work as T.O.C.s in the Richmond School District and another neighbouring school district. The Richmond School District outlines in its Employee Handbook that it “is accepting of the notion that Richmond T.O.C.s may work in one other school district....” (Richmond School District Teaching Staff Employee Handbook, 1999 p. 27, emphasis in original). Despite the policy of the Richmond School District, Kerri feels she must work as a T.O.C. in Richmond and two other districts:

On the very first day of school, Rutherford called me and I wasn’t willing to turn them down. Even though Richmond said only two [districts], I went. I had to decide [on which districts to work for] so because of proximity, I dropped Rutherford and went with Richmond and Clearwater. Recently though, I have not been getting enough work so I’ve begun accepting calls from Rutherford again. That’s not very good but I need to fill those days. That’s not very good because if Richmond catches me...but if they’re not offering the jobs, what am I supposed to do?

Lynn is in a situation similar to Kerri. Basically, Lynn outlines her T.O.C. employment as an economic issue:

When you’re faced with no full-time job, you shift gears and take what’s there. It’s too bad that it’s just come down to dollars and cents. ...Now, I’m with Richmond and St. Kilda and my name is with Kailley House....

The participants are T.O.C.s in at least one other school district in addition to the Richmond School District. Generally, this appears to be necessary from an economic
standpoint as the participants are attempting to secure as many teaching days as possible. The participants accept the assignment from the first district that contacts them. Consequently, the participants may have to adapt to diverse teaching environments in each district they teach in.

Number of schools that participants teach in as T.O.C.s

T.O.C.s teach in a number of different schools within their two or three large Lower Mainland school districts. Lynn gives a vivid account of the number of schools in St. Kilda that she has taught in as a T.O.C.:

But after eight months, I’ve been to fourteen of the sixteen high schools. There are only two I haven’t been to.

Ernie has had a similar experience as he outlines that he has “been to every high school in Richmond”. There are ten secondary schools in the Richmond School District.

The implications of Lynn and Ernie travelling to so many schools in one district are widespread and will be explored later in this chapter.

Wide range of subject areas taught by participants

It appears that the nature of T.O.C. teaching for the participants includes teaching in a variety of subject areas. In many cases, the T.O.C.s are trained to teach subjects that they are assigned to but they are often teaching in unfamiliar subject areas. Janet’s specialties are Science and Biology but she outlines that since she started T.O.C. teaching, she has worked in a variety of areas:

Mostly Math, I had to do AP [Advanced Placement] Calculus once and that was scary. I can do Math, any Math up to Grade 12 is no problem. But Calculus, blah. ...only once I had Art, and English. Art I didn’t mind. ...English was kind of weird. ...the odd Physics 12. I don’t know Physics that well. ...One elementary I went to in Rutherford. It was librarian.
However, Janet has had the luxury of dealing mostly with math assignments, which she feels relatively comfortable teaching.

Kerri appears to have encountered an extremely wide variety of subject areas since she has begun T.O.C. teaching. She indicates that she has taught:

Kindergarten to Grade 12. Today I did International Baccalaurate. ...So, I’ve done all ages. I’ve done...the teen parent thing at Otago High. ...I’ve done Punjabi. ...I’ve done Mandarin...Art...Sciences...Math, English...Drama. I haven’t done any woodworking. ...Sewing, Cooking, I’ve done E.S.L., I’ve done Resource work.

Kerri’s willingness to accept any T.O.C. assignment may be a reason for her exposure to so many subject areas. Ernie has also been T.O.C. teaching in a number of different subject areas early in his T.O.C. teaching year:

I’ve done Woodwork, English, P.E., Socials, Resource, Science, Math, and I think a few others. Probably about six to eight different subjects.

Ernie indicates that as the school year has continued, he has noticed that his T.O.C. assignments appear to be more specific:

It’s been more specific recently the last few months. Mostly just P.E. and Social Studies. English and Resource here and there.

Lynn’s T.O.C. teaching assignments may not have been as varied as Kerri’s or Ernie’s but her experience has required her to teach outside of her specialty areas:

There’s only been a few times that I’ve been called outside my areas. There was one time I was called to do Business Ed., Finance, and Marketing, Grade 11 and 12 Accounting. Things like that. My reaction ... was “Don’t you have anything else?” ... Oh, and another one was a First Nations program that was completely out of my field as well.

All participants teach in two or even three school districts, visit a number of different schools in those districts, and deal with subject areas that they may have little or
no training for. The implications posed by these situations may be extensive in the day to
day work of the participants as T.O.C.s.

**What is the beginning of the day like for the participants?**

From a practical viewpoint, it appears that the start of a teaching day for a T.O.C. is full of uncertainty. The participants may receive their notification from two or more
districts the evening before or the morning of an assignment. They may be contacted by
a computer voice system that is used by one district while another district employs
clerical personnel to contact T.O.C.s. Nonetheless, a T.O.C. begins his/her day with very
little control over upcoming activities. Lynn’s account of the beginning of her day as a
T.O.C. outlines the situations she must react to:

Phone rings at an ungodly hour. Take the call and scribble it down on whatever
piece of paper that is near your bed. Um, look at the map if you’re not sure where
this place is. Go back to bed if there’s more time. Seriously, try to arrive at least
thirty minutes in advance. That’s routine for me. Then, I show up at the office
and there might be one or two of the early secretaries there and if they’re
organized, the keys and day sheet are there for you on the counter. If not, then
you have to wait politely and pretend you know who the secretary is and make
eye contact and pretend to be friendly until somebody comes to serve you.
Sometimes that may take a second and sometimes it may take five minutes
because they’re busy or they think I’m a student. If they finally realize that I’m a
T.O.C. waiting for instructions, I’ll go to the mailbox and get whatever notes
there are.

Lynn’s account of her activities before she steps into a classroom reveal that she may be
entering a situation where she is unrecognized by clerical staff and the school’s
procedures for T.O.C.s may be unfamiliar to her. Generally, she has little control over
the start of her teaching day.

Ernie is faced with a similar lack of control as his T.O.C. day begins. He deals
with call-outs from two districts and has developed a morning routine to respond to
potential confusion that may result from a late call:
Richmond calls at about 5:45 a.m. for me consistently, which is good. Gore has called up to 7:45 a.m. ... that’s tough to get to Gore then. Richmond is pretty good, they will call and ask if I can do whatever the job is. Or if you get requested, they will tell you where you’ve been requested and if it’s a half day or a full day, etc. Gore is similar. They tell when the school starts which is good because they all start at different times. There was one day I was a little bit late because I thought the school started at 8:25 a.m. and they started at 8:15 a.m. The first day I got called from Gore, they called me at 7:20 a.m. and I hadn’t showered yet so it was a mad panic to get out there on time. After that, I just set my alarm for 6:00 a.m. and I get up regardless if I get called or not.

Once he arrived at the school for his assignment, Ernie’s account parallels Lynn’s description of the school’s sign-in process for a T.O.C. Ernie is unfamiliar with the school’s routine as he begins to discover how his day may unfold:

You go into a school and the first thing you do is go into the office. And, um, there’s always a thing on one of the secretary’s desks with sign-in sheets. You look for the teacher you’re in for and then your name should be next to it in the T.O.C. spot. Sign your name, put down your licence plate number so they don’t tow you. They don’t want to tow you because usually you don’t know where to park. ... then they give you keys and they give you a, basically just a syllabus of what the day holds, how their schedule is and what the teacher has in Block A, Block B, C, D, when lunch is etc. So, you get that, you to to your room....

Janet’s account of what she faces at the start of a day supports the challenges outlined by Lynn and Ernie. Generally, a sense of confusion permeates Janet’s actions as she begins her T.O.C. assignment:

I go straight to the office, assuming I can find it. It’s usually relatively easy and if you haven’t been to a school before, you don’t always know who the person is that takes care of you. So, you have to wander around the office a little bit until you find them. I pick up my schedule, sign in, and then, the maps. Oh man, some schools have the worst maps. I hate that. Half the battle is trying to find the classroom. ... Well, I’ve never been to this school before, where’s this classroom? ... I always try to give myself at least a half an hour because sometimes that’s not even enough. Depending on the school, some start at 8:30 a.m., some start at 8:15 a.m. and that always differs as well.

The theme of a T.O.C.’s lack of familiarity with the school’s routine and physical design is emerging in these three accounts. Each participant notes that there is a degree
of uncertainty associated with the start of the day. Ernie, Janet, and Lynn have their own vehicle to overcome transportation challenges that may contribute to the confusion at the start of the day. Kerri, on the other hand, faces additional logistical difficulties that may compound an already challenging situation:

... I find Richmond calls way too late. Clearwater calls earlier and they call at night. Richmond really needs to call at night. ... sometimes Richmond has called me at 5:15 a.m., which surprised me because they have never called before 6:15 a.m. Clearwater is automated so that can be interesting. Richmond’s not [automated]. OK, so they call. I’m half-awake. But I’m learning now. At 6:00 a.m., I look at the call display on my cellphone, definitely have a cell .... I run out the door. ... if I have to take the bus and I don’t know where I’m going, I’m out the door by 5:45-6:00 a.m. ... Sometimes I don’t get called until 7:00 a.m. and sometimes I have been tempted to just stand at the bus stop because the bus to Richmond is that way and Clearwater’s that way. So, ... arrive at the school, sometimes I try to get there at least half an hour early but that’s not always possible, especially with the bus. So, show up, ... you sign in, you’re all ready to go, you run to your classroom and read whatever instructions the teacher has left for you.

The four T.O.C.s have not yet determined what the regular teacher has left for them to cover in the classroom. In order to develop an understanding of the instructional activities that may lie ahead, each of the participants has had to deal with challenges associated with arriving at the school, finding a contact person in the school, and finding their classroom for the day. It appears that the participants prefer to arrive at their assignment in time to orient themselves to the day ahead. Lynn, Janet, and Kerri indicate that they try to arrive thirty minutes before classes start. This extra time is necessary to allow for signing in and finding the classroom. The next challenge is finding and understanding the directions left by the regular teacher.

Kerri outlines that occasionally regular teachers do not leave clear directions or adequate lesson plans. Coupled with the T.O.C.’s general lack of familiarity with the
school, the additional challenges of poor directions only increases the confusion at the start of the day:

You hope it’s stuff you kind of know. ... the worst is when they [regular teacher] just leave the day book. ... Then I’ve had lots of teachers fax their stuff in or at least say “Please call when you get in.” That’s so much nicer than if they say “Oh, my day book’s there” but the day book is in their head. We have no idea. I’ve seen where some have had “Science. Video” and you spend half an hour running around. ... So, stuff like that, don’t rely on your day books as we have no idea what you’re talking about. ... Sometimes a teacher gives detailed instructions which is really nice.

Kerri indicates that as T.O.C.s are coping with an unfamiliar physical environment when they enter a school, they then have to prepare to deal with the uncertainty of potentially inadequate lesson plans or directions that are left by the regular teacher. Sudden emergency or sickness may not allow the regular teacher to leave adequate classroom directions. Kerri recognizes this reality:

And, sometimes, I don’t blame them [regular teachers] because they didn’t know the night before that they were going to be sick. That’s O.K.

Although there may be empathy for the reasons for the regular teacher’s absence, the participants still express frustration when faced with inadequate directions or poor lesson plans. Janet outlines how her teaching day continues after signing in:

Trying to find the material, that’s always the scariest thing. Not having anything, like what happened to me today. Finding that material and reading it is probably the most important thing. ... It’s reading that material, turning the lights on, does the overhead projector actually work? I usually have my own overhead pens because sometimes they don’t leave stuff for you. Is everything hole punched? That’s another thing when you’re handing something out and it’s not hole punched. One of the little things that bugs me.

Lynn’s account of the tasks she carries out when first entering the classroom is somewhat similar to Janet’s. The uncertainty that Lynn is faced with is demonstrated by her use of the word ‘if’ in this excerpt:
I'll ask a student on the way or a secretary if she could direct me to the room. So I get there as fast as I can so I can locate the materials and try to locate the light switch etc. Then try to make some sense of the lesson plan and if there are any photocopies to be done ... and see if I need a key. ... Or, if I'm doing a test ... if the teacher has asked to use dividers ... to find the attendance sheets. ... Find the day sheets if they have them at school and to find seating plans. And to me a seating plan is crucial because if I don't have one, my whole day is just wrecked because students think this is a way to get away with anything.

Even before a student has entered the classroom, it appears that the T.O.C. faces a maze of situations that largely depend on how well the regular teacher has prepared for his/her absence. Lynn tries to orient herself to the classroom and prepare for the students she will teach and this is evident in her description of the various tasks she carries out.

Ernie has a somewhat more relaxed attitude towards preparing for the day. He recognizes that most of the time the regular teacher has left clear directions and lesson plans. However, he specifically indicates that a lack of material from the regular teacher can lead to difficulties for the T.O.C.:

So, ... you go to your room ... and hopefully, if there is stuff left out for the T.O.C., then usually, it's pretty good. Pretty easy stuff, pretty straight-forward stuff. Sheets, or just homework, textbook stuff. ... sometimes there is nothing left or stuff is left but it doesn't take up [the whole class], it takes up a quarter of the class. So, that's a little bit annoying ....

Although much of what greets a T.O.C. at the start of the day is confusing, unclear, and frustrating, Kerri indicates that she has rarely been left totally lacking direction for the classes she will teach for the rest of her day. While all four participants have stated that inadequate lesson plans or unclear directions contribute to frustrations in the classroom, Kerri acknowledges that:

Sometimes a teacher gives detailed instructions which is really nice. Details that usually don't tell you how to teach it word for word but at least say "The worksheets are in the corner ... or ask this particular student and they will know about this." ... it is very rare that I have to tell the kids to have a seat and be quiet for ten minutes while I try to find out what is going on.
All four of the participants have expressed that the start of their T.O.C. day may consist of an early morning phone call from a computer or from a person directing them to their assignment, which may be at a school that is unfamiliar to them. They then must sign-in with a school secretary and this procedure may be different from school to school and the T.O.C. may not be recognized initially by the school staff. Once sign-in is completed, the next challenge may be to find the classroom and, hopefully, find the directions or lesson plans that have been left for the T.O.C. by the regular teacher. If the regular teacher has left clear directions for the T.O.C., it appears that the T.O.C. may have some time to read over the directions before the students arrive for class. However, if the directions are poor or there are no directions at all, then the confusion, and possibly frustration, may continue for the T.O.C. The participants indicate that facing a class as a T.O.C. with little or no direction is a very frustrating experience. For example, Lynn explains that if she isn’t left with a seating plan:

... my whole day is just wrecked because students think this is a way to get away with anything.

It appears that as a T.O.C.’s teaching day progresses, challenges faced at the start of the day may lead to additional challenges as students begin classes with an unfamiliar T.O.C.

Further analysis of the challenges faced by the participants has lead to the development of six common themes that may be central to T.O.C. teaching. The common themes are identified as:

1. Lack of T.O.C. familiarity with the teaching environment;
2. Lack of T.O.C. authority in schools;
3. Lack of credibility of the T.O.C. as a teacher;
4. Challenges with classroom management;

5. Indifferent treatment of the T.O.C. as a professional;


As each of these common themes are explored, it becomes apparent that there is a degree of inter-relatedness between the themes. For example, the lack of T.O.C. familiarity with the teaching environment impacts other common themes such as the lack of T.O.C. authority in schools and classroom management.

**Common theme: Lack of T.O.C. familiarity with the teaching environment**

As T.O.C. teaching is itinerant in nature and requires the T.O.C. to work in various settings, lack of familiarity with the teaching environment is defined as the T.O.C. being unaware of the daily routines and procedures of the classrooms and schools in which they teach and a lack of information about the students they will face. Each classroom and school follows different procedures and has different expectations of students and teachers. As T.O.C.s teach in various schools and are faced with unfamiliar situations, their effectiveness in the classroom may be affected.

**Lack of familiarity with routines and procedures**

Many of the experiences outlined by the participants relate in some fashion to the theme of lack of familiarity with the teaching environment. For Janet, lack of familiarity is one of the most difficult aspects of the occupation:

The hardest thing I see is that every classroom is different, their procedures, you don’t know what they are. You kind of feel dumb because most of the time, the teacher doesn’t tell you that so you either make it up or ....
Ernie echoes Janet’s frustration. They each contend that being unsure of the procedures in a classroom leads to anxiety and Ernie identifies that his effectiveness as a teacher may be hindered:

I didn’t know much about what they usually do at this school or just how the gym is set up or what they play in what gym. Some schools don’t want you to play cosom hockey on this floor so …... So, there was a little bit of uncertainty there. I didn’t come off as confident as I should have and it wasn’t a very good class.

Lynn indicates that a T.O.C. does not have the luxury that a regular teacher would enjoy in knowing the structure of each teaching day. A T.O.C. does not know the routines of the schools he/she is assigned to and this lack of familiarity may invite further difficulties during the teaching day:

... as a T.O.C. you don’t know what you’re doing until you get there. And because the schools are so different, you cannot even have in your mind a mental breakdown of blocks because every school has one or two minutes off per block, or they might have a recess before or after second block, so there’s no routine whatsoever, no schedule. ... So just that whole idea of knowing ahead of time and getting advance notice, all that kind of, what’s normal to a regular contracted teacher’s life is completely unpredictable for a T.O.C. It’s just the nature of the work. ... Because you are dealing with unfamiliarity, you’re not familiar and you’re not prepared. You already feel like your defenses are down.

Kerri reflects the views of the other participants regarding the lack of familiarity with the routines of the schools she is assigned to for T.O.C. teaching:

... I think the first time I showed up in Rutherford, I just showed up at the [school] office and said “Here I am. Now what do I do?” When you show up at a school, every school is different….. Not just districts, but every school.

A T.O.C. may find that the differences between districts and schools hinder the T.O.C.’s classroom effectiveness during the day. Ernie states clearly that being unfamiliar with the P.E. procedures in a school lead to uncertainty and eventually has a negative impact on his confidence. These factors contributed to a negative instructional situation for him during that class. Janet recognizes that it is very difficult for her to deal
with different classroom procedures and she often feels extremely lost to the point of feeling ‘dumb’. Lynn explains that she recognizes the unknown aspects of T.O.C. work and that it is very difficult to feel prepared for the day ahead. She indicates that this situation may impact on her teaching effectiveness as her “defences are down” when she begins her day in a classroom. Kerri’s view of the lack of familiarity associated with T.O.C. teaching in various schools supports the perceptions of the others. Her comments mirror Lynn’s perception of the unpredictability of T.O.C. teaching as she has no idea what to expect when she arrives at her assignment for the day.

**Lack of familiarity with students**

The participants stated that a major frustration associated with T.O.C. teaching was the lack of familiarity with students. Not knowing the names of students or backgrounds of students surfaced as a major challenge for the participants as they carried out their classroom responsibilities.

Initially, the participants’ views relating to the lack of familiarity with students became obvious when the participants were asked about their perceptions of how T.O.C. teaching differed from regular teaching. Generally, the participants indicate that one of the main differences between regular teaching and T.O.C. teaching is the absence of a relationship between the T.O.C. and students. Kerri simply states that:

... first off, I suppose we don’t get to know the kids as well as you [a regular teacher] get to.

Kerri’s perception is supported by Ernie’s response to the difference between regular teaching and T.O.C. teaching:

T.O.C. teaching is more ... babysitting than actual teaching ... because the kids know you’re not the regular teacher. ... it’s really hard to have any rapport with
the students. Like, you can ask them about themselves, ... you can ask them but they’re not as comfortable as they would be with a regular teacher.

Ernie continues to outline how important it is for him to learn the names of the student he will be teaching. It appears that knowledge of students’ names is viewed by Ernie as a necessity in contributing to classroom management:

The worst thing is not knowing names. I hate it when teachers don’t leave a seating plan with names because the hardest thing is when you tell a kid to sit down and you say “Hey you, sit down.” When you say, “Richard, sit down”, that has a much bigger impact. That’s a huge thing, just knowing names. They don’t like it when you know their name.

Janet shares Ernie’s perception of the importance of knowing students’ names. Her comments also allude to the frustration she feels at the lack of knowledge of student names:

I think the biggest thing is not knowing the students and not knowing the rules and [students] taking advantage of you or trying to take advantage of you, trying to make you look dumb. ... Not knowing the students names and faces. That’s the biggest thing I think. ... Because everytime you go somewhere, you’re starting from scratch.

There appears to be a relationship for the participant between classroom management and knowing, or having reference to, the names of students. Ernie indicates that knowing the names of students gives him an advantage as a T.O.C. Janet suggests that she feels students will take advantage of her if she does not know names. Lynn’s reflection on the importance of seating plans for her as a T.O.C. is similar to Ernie’s observation:

You wouldn’t believe how much that [seating plan] helps. Even a simple grid with names. For me, it was a really big help because as soon as you start calling people, for the first ten minutes if you start using their names, then the students realize you mean business.
The theme of classroom management also emerges from these excerpts and it will be explored further later in this chapter.

The frustrations associated with not knowing students’ names and backgrounds may pose safety and instructional concerns that the T.O.C.s may not be equipped to deal with. Kerri outlines an incident that took place largely as a result of her lack of familiarity with a student:

I felt terrible the other day. ... There was this one kid who was completely slacking off, not even paying attention. I asked him to write super easy stuff and he wasn’t doing anything. ... I thought he was slacking off because he was a dumb jerk. Anyway, I went out and realized afterward when the T.A. [Teaching Assistant] came by that he was actually quite modified. Oops. But you know, there’s something that the [regular] teacher should do. Have a little list that says “This student here is modified....” I felt really bad....

Instructional concerns similar to Kerri’s that result from a lack of familiarity with students are frustrations for all four T.O.C.s. However, a lack of familiarity may affect a student’s health or safety and can be frightening to a T.O.C. Janet poses a potential scenario that she feels completely unprepared to deal with:

... for example, you don’t always know the medical history of the students. Like there’s someone with epilepsy and they fall down into a seizure, what do you do? Janet describes a situation she was faced with as a T.O.C. that indicates the difficulties that could face a T.O.C. in a real emergency:

Once there was a fire drill and it was during a P.E. class I was supervising and half the students were still changing. They [the school administration] didn’t really tell me or give my any information. ... You’re in a P.E. class and most of the students don’t even know there’s a sub, they’re supposed to go out on the field and I’m supposed to take attendance. I don’t even know who the students are. That was tough. ... There’s nothing you can do.

The implications of a lack of familiarity of the names and backgrounds of students appear to permeate many aspects of T.O.C. teaching. The participants indicate
that classroom management may be positively impacted by T.O.C. knowledge of the names of students and student backgrounds. The need for student names and background information in the event of an emergency is vital for T.O.C.s to feel prepared to deal with such eventualities.

Effects of the increased familiarity with schools and students on the participants

The impact on the participants of not knowing the students in a school is further demonstrated by examining their perceptions when they T.O.C. teach in a school on a regular basis. The general reaction is quite striking as the T.O.C. becomes more familiar, not only with the students, but also with the rules and procedures of the school. It appears that the participants who T.O.C. on a regular basis in certain schools become less apprehensive and their focus moves from classroom management to instructional practices. Janet summarizes her experiences at a school that she has become familiar with:

I go to Hall’s Gap Secondary and anytime I’m there, it’s always on the second floor and kids know my name. I’m walking down the hallway and they are saying hello to me. And the kids I’ve subbed for earlier on in the year will say hi to me because they still remember me. It’s totally different when they know you and you don’t even have to introduce yourself as opposed to going somewhere.... And they know what you’re like and they already know what they should do and what they can’t do and all that stuff. ... Oh, god, it’s so interesting when you have the same kid when you’re back there all the time so you kind of get to know them a little bit....

Kerri reflects on the close contacts that she feels she develops with students, even after only a few days of successive T.O.C. work:

And when you T.O.C. for three days in a row, you really love those kids and you really want to know how they are and stuff....
Ernie’s perceptions of returning to a school on a regular basis are similar to Janet’s and Kerri’s. He refers again to the relationship between classroom management and familiarity with students and the school:

It’s always nice when you come to a school and the secretaries know your name ... and people knowing your name makes such a difference rather than going into a school where you’re just the person filling in for Mr. Jones. It’s just mostly when students know you. It just makes it so much easier. Usually, when you come in, your guard’s a little bit up when you don’t know the class and you have to be sort of authoritative at the beginning or else they will walk all over you. But when they know you, you can just be yourself. ... It’s just way more pleasant, it’s easier to teach than just treating it like a job.

Ernie acknowledges the relationship he feels exists between classroom management and familiarity with students in a school:

Yeh, if you’ve been to a school where you know the students, you do more teaching because they don’t really have to test you, they know what your limits are. ... You can focus more on teaching.

The perceptions of Janet, Kerri, and Ernie are shared by Lynn. Her comments reflect her decreased anxiety in the classroom and reflect the concept of having less classroom management concerns:

If it’s the second or third time I’ve been with that particular class then I do feel very much in control because sometime I still remember some of their names or they recognize me. So, that really helps because they already have some expectations of how to behave or what is going to be done in class.

The Request System

Janet and Lynn make specific reference to the request system of T.O.C. assignment that is formally employed by the Richmond School District. The request system permits a regular teacher to request a T.O.C. to cover his/her classes when the regular teacher is absent. The request system is criticized by some who argue that it effectively makes the regular teacher the T.O.C.’s employer. Opponents argue that
school districts should not allow classroom teachers to determine how T.O.C.s are assigned.

However, Lynn and Janet offer the perspective that by allowing teachers to request specific T.O.C.s, the school district is encouraging teachers to call for T.O.C.s who have covered classes in a satisfactory manner. Consequently, T.O.C.s are called into requesting teachers’ classrooms more consistently, and the T.O.C.s become more familiar with the students and procedures in those schools. This situation appears to improve the T.O.C.s effectiveness in the classroom and reduce some T.O.C. concerns such as classroom management.

Janet offers her view supporting the request system of T.O.C. assignment:

I think the teacher is looking out for their classroom. The teacher obviously liked what happened in the classroom. There is a possibility there was positive feedback from the class as well and I think it’s beneficial for the T.O.C. when they come back to the same place. You know what’s going on, you know most likely what you’re going to be doing, you know some of the kids, so it is helpful for the T.O.C. to get a request. I don’t see anything wrong with that.

Lynn feels that the request system in Richmond allows the T.O.C. to become more familiar with some schools, while in the St. Kilda district, which doesn’t promote requests, T.O.C.s remain largely anonymous:

I know Richmond because of the request system, people get to know you and the secretaries get to know you by name. But in St. Kilda, you’re very much anonymous, you’re very much just a T.O.C. without an employee number.

The participants have indicated that unfamiliarity with the rules and procedures in a classroom, school, and district may contribute to feelings of frustration as the T.O.C. begins his/her teaching assignment. The participants contend that the confusion experienced at the start of a day and the associated unpredictable nature of teaching in an unfamiliar school may adversely affect their time in the classroom.
Additionally, a major concern for the participants is the lack of familiarity with students’ names and backgrounds. Each participant placed a great deal of importance on getting to know and using students’ names. Knowing students’ names or having reference to students’ names appears to assist the participants in dealing with classroom management issues.

The participants state that their concerns associated with a lack of familiarity with the teaching environment are reduced significantly if they have the opportunity to T.O.C. teach at a school on several occasions. They indicate that the focus of their T.O.C. day moves from classroom management towards increased teaching effectiveness. The participants stress that they feel more comfortable returning to a school that they are familiar with.

**Common theme: Lack of credibility of the T.O.C. as a teacher**

The common theme of credibility is defined here as the perceived ability of the T.O.C. to be an effective teacher in the classroom setting. Credibility relates to the degree that a school’s staff and students feel a T.O.C. is knowledgeable in a curricular area and is able to maintain a productive learning environment in the classroom.

**Participants’ views of T.O.C. teaching before becoming a T.O.C.**

All participants expressed similar perceptions of T.O.C.s before they began T.O.C. teaching. The participants’ views of T.O.C.s from their days as secondary school students appear to develop a stereotypical picture of a negative classroom environment when a T.O.C. was present. When asked about his high school memories of T.O.C.s, Ernie broke into a huge grin before explaining:

... I can totally relate to the kids when I T.O.C. right now because as soon as you walk into the room and you see a sub, you think “Yes, it’s going to be an easy
day, we have a substitute.” ... Or you just don’t even go to class because it’s a sub. You have the mindset that the stuff you’re not allowed to get away with a normal teacher, you’re allowed to at least try with a T.O.C.

Ernie’s account indicates that students took advantage of the T.O.C.’s presence and classroom behaviour and standards may have declined. Kerri’s comments are similar to Ernie’s as she identifies a change in the classroom atmosphere when a T.O.C. was in the classroom as she recalls her high school perceptions of T.O.C.s:

God, take advantage of them. If it was a sub, you could slack off. It’s the same thing that I get here. You walk in the door and you hear “Yes, it’s a sub!” ... you can take advantage and I was the same.

Lynn’s memories of T.O.C.s while in high school highlight the lack of respect held for T.O.C.s by students. She explains that this lack of respect may have contributed to a decline in the quality of the classroom environment:

... when I was in high school we called them subs or other derogatory terms. I don’t remember anybody having much respect for them. It was just an automatic free block where the attitude was no work would be done. ... there would be that one third who would automatically see it as an opportunity to misbehave and make life miserable for the sub.

All four participants have explained that when they were in high school, students generally felt that classroom behaviour and effort would deteriorate when a T.O.C. was teaching. Janet’s account might indicate that students in her high school class felt a T.O.C. was not qualified for a subject and therefore, had little credibility as a teacher:

I remember once having a French sub and he didn’t know any French. I think the underlying assumption is that your sub doesn’t really know that particular field.

The participants’ accounts of their perceptions as high school students of T.O.C.s indicates that students viewed T.O.C.s as less credible than the regular teacher.
Now that the participants are in the role of a T.O.C., it appears that they feel students’ perceptions of T.O.C.s have changed little. When asked about students’ reactions towards her presence in the classroom, Janet observed:

They’re absolutely thrilled. ... “Yea, we get to slack off today, we’ve got a sub.” They’re always happy.

Lynn has a similar perception of the students’ response to her presence in place of the regular teacher:

... they almost automatically as soon as they see you in the classroom, they’ve written the day off, they’ve written that class off. It’s a party block, or a free block.

Kerri’s experiences are extremely similar to Janet’s and Lynn’s regarding how she feel students react to her presence in the classroom:

That’s one thing when they walk into the room and see you. “Yah, it’s a sub!” and I think “Oh no.” ... It’s like when they score a goal. ... They know most of the normal rules don’t apply ...

Ernie has a similar perception of the students’ reactions to seeing a T.O.C. in the classroom. His explanation draws a connection between students’ lack of familiarity with a T.O.C. and the resultant lack of respect for the T.O.C. from a student viewpoint:

You [T.O.C.] have no connection with them [students]. So, they don’t really care to listen to you and ... they have little respect for you because they don’t know you.

The participants have indicated that much of what they now experience as T.O.C.s is very similar to what they recall of T.O.C.s when they were high school students. Essentially, they are perceived by students to have less credibility than the regular teacher. Ernie and Janet suggest possible reasons for the students’ reactions that relate to knowledge of subject material or the students’ lack of familiarity with the T.O.C.
The perceived lack of T.O.C. credibility in a classroom may be a result of a number of factors named by the participants, each will be discussed in turn.

**Lack of T.O.C. credibility due to lack of subject background**

It has been established that the participants often T.O.C. teach in a variety of school settings and in a number of different subject areas. Janet feels an aspect of T.O.C. teaching is that a T.O.C. will often face unfamiliar subject areas. Earlier, she recalled that as a student, the assumption was that a T.O.C. probably had little or no background knowledge of the subject. She finds that as a T.O.C., that may often be the situation:

I was at Hunt Secondary and it was a Math 12 class and the students were, I could tell they were whispering about something, like “Can you tell what she is?” And then one of them asked “Are you a drama sub?” “No, why would you ask?” “Because last time we had a drama sub.” “No, I can do Math.” It’s just everyone assumes that you don’t know what you’re going to be doing. If you get called for something, it’s a high probability that you don’t know.

Janet describes a situation where she realized it was obvious to the students that she was uncomfortable with the subject material:

The students almost knew. The teacher left me all these notes, she was very prepared, and I had to give them all these examples. If I had known the stuff, I could have done the steps. But I don’t know the stuff so I had to keep referring to the notes. It’s almost like they can tell you don’t know and I don’t like that.

Lynn expresses anxiety when faced with a subject area that is unfamiliar to her. Her comment implies that if she is teaching a class for the first time, as well as teaching an unfamiliar subject, she does not feel in control of the situation. She recognizes that the students will quickly question her credibility as a competent teacher:

But if it [being with the specific class] is a first, hum, you know, especially if it is not in my area, definitely feel out of control. Yep, it’s because I don’t have a strong command of that subject. The kids know right away that “Oh, she’s not a Math teacher.” Suddenly, your credibility goes right down to nothing or it goes
negative. It's already nothing, it goes way down. I feel out of control if it's something I don't know.

Janet recognizes that a lack of subject background is a part of T.O.C. teaching and that a T.O.C.'s credibility with students may be affected if the T.O.C. is perceived to lack understanding of the material. However, Janet's view is that it may be helpful for the T.O.C. to be open with students:

You tell them “This is not my main field so if you have detailed questions, I may not be able to answer them.” There's nothing else to do. The Physics 12 had a series of notes to do and I kind of went through them and they were all confused. I was kind of confused myself. I wasn't much help.

Kerri supports Janet's view that lack of subject background is a reality of T.O.C. teaching and that it may affect credibility in the classroom. Kerri also feels that being frank with the students is the only way to deal with the situation:

Like in Math, she had me doing Quadratic Equations. I called her and talked to her [regular teacher] and she said “Well, are you a Math person?” I said no and she said “Do you want to try it?” I asked if she had anything else planned and she said “No, not really.” She said “Well, don’t tell the kids you don’t know Math.” How can you not? There's no way I couldn’t tell them. But you know what? That just comes with the territory.

In this example, the regular teacher felt that if Kerri let it slip to the students that Kerri wasn’t a ‘Math person’, Kerri would have a more difficult time with the class. It appears that both Kerri and Janet feel they may be more credible if they are open with students about their lack of subject background.

**Lack of T.O.C. credibility due to actions of regular teachers**

The participants indicate that their credibility in the classroom may be adversely affected by the nature of activities left for the T.O.C. by the regular teacher, and by the manner in which the T.O.C. is supported when the regular teacher returns.
Ernie touches on issues that include adequate lesson plans from the regular teacher for the T.O.C. and support from the regular teacher on discipline matters. In his comments, Ernie is implying that his credibility as a T.O.C. is greatly affected by the actions of the regular teacher:

... for instance, this one teacher left nothing for me to give to the students, so I developed and expanded on his little bit. They were asking me if this is what he had written down and I said yes. You never say no. The next day when the teacher came in, the kids handed it in and he said “I don’t want you to do this” and he just threw it out. I went back in to that school and the kids said “We weren’t supposed to do that.” So, instantly, I lost all credibility.

In this case, Ernie feels he was left with no lesson plan and was then left with no support from the regular teacher when he expanded the lesson. However, in dealing with the situation by essentially lying to the students, Ernie may have compounded the problem. He feels his role at that school has been compromised and his credibility as a teacher has been damaged, but in this instance he may have contributed to the problem.

Ernie also stresses that in areas such as student discipline T.O.C.s need the support of regular teachers. Support for the T.O.C. from the regular teacher will help combat the stereotype of T.O.C.s held by students that erodes T.O.C. credibility:

If a student misbehaves in a T.O.C.’s class, it shouldn’t be brushed off. I think it should be dealt with because down the line the kids just get the attitude that you can take advantage of T.O.C.s.

Janet echoes Ernie’s assertion that the regular teacher’s actions can impact the credibility of the T.O.C.:

I mean you get the people, there are twenty minutes left in the class and they ask “May I go to the washroom?” Sure and they never come back. You think I don’t notice that? How dumb do you think I am? If I was a teacher and I came back to that, I would definitely give them a detention. ... Who knows what teachers do for follow-up as well. If you’ve had a bad day, do they actually do something about it the next class? Or do they not care? Oh well ....
Janet also points out that regular teachers may contribute to the stereotyped views students have towards T.O.C.s. Janet feels that regular teachers either organize their day for a T.O.C. to carry on with instruction or merely use the T.O.C. in a supervisory role:

I think every teacher's perception of a T.O.C. is different as well. I mean they can either use it [T.O.C.] as if they were there or they can sort of do nothing with it. And it's because a lot of teachers choose to do nothing with their days that it's sort of why students have a perception of T.O.C.s. That's why they are happy to see you [T.O.C.]. “Yea, we're doing nothing today!” And most of the time it's true. It's a problem.

Janet indicates that the perceptions of regular teachers toward T.O.C.s may affect the T.O.C.s' credibility in the classroom. Kerri supports Janet's observation as she feels regular teachers dictate the role of the T.O.C. in the classroom:

There are some situations where I've walked in and the teacher has said “Teach adverbs.” Oh my god, I have to review adverbs and I can't remember what that is. But I like it. I've had other teachers, sometimes I've gone into a classroom and I've had to just give tests all day. ... it's so boring. It's so ... you don't feel like you're a teacher, you're a babysitter.

Kerri's comments imply that the tasks left by the regular teacher for the T.O.C. may involve instructional responsibilities, supervisory responsibilities, or a combination of both. It appears that Kerri feels more credible as a teacher when involved in instruction. It may be that students may also perceive her as more credible when she fills an instructional, rather than supervisory, role.

The participants have indicated that they perceive T.O.C. stereotyping in schools has a negative impact on their credibility in the classroom. Students may feel that a T.O.C. in the classroom means reduced expectations of academic performance and behavioural standards. Teachers may contribute to this stereotype by leaving directions and lesson plans for T.O.C.s that do not provide opportunities for T.O.C.s to engage in instructional activities with the students.
Common theme - Lack of T.O.C. authority in the classroom

The common theme of lack of T.O.C. authority is defined here as the difficulty faced by T.O.C.s in establishing their presence as an authority figure in the classroom. T.O.C. authority relates to the degree that students recognize the role played by the T.O.C. in maintaining the learning environment in the classroom. T.O.C. authority is linked closely to T.O.C. credibility and leads to the common theme of classroom management. It is apparent as the common themes are explored individually, they are closely connected and influence one another.

Participants' perceptions of T.O.C. authority in the classroom

The participants provide insight into their views that the classroom environment should change little when a T.O.C. is present and that the academic and behavioural standards of the regular teacher should be maintained. The comments from Ernie and Lynn indicate that in their opinion, students should view the T.O.C. in a similar manner to the regular teacher. Ernie explains:

I don't think there should be any type of behaviour change from the regular teacher to when a T.O.C. is in the classroom.

Lynn develops Ernie's view further as she outlines that students often fail to understand that a T.O.C. may be only a contract away from a regular teaching position and in her opinion, a T.O.C. should be viewed in the same light as the regular teacher:

There shouldn't be, on the students' part, change for them because this is a teacher [T.O.C.], who again does not hold a contract but could very well be your teacher next year. ... You [students] shouldn't see this teacher any differently as you would perceive your regular or daily or contracted teacher.

Despite Ernie and Lynn's view of how students should view T.O.C.s in the classroom, participants generally recognize that students view the T.O.C. as having less
authority than the regular teacher. Janet expresses her perception of how she is viewed as a T.O.C. by students:

I find that sometimes students don’t really care what you have to say. They’ve got the general idea that you don’t have the same authority as my regular teacher does.

Specifically, Janet continues to explain that the lack of T.O.C. authority may lead to frustration as students openly challenge her:

Even though there were only a few students but they were still very obnoxious. It’s because they didn’t do any work and you know, if I was a regular teacher, I wouldn’t put up with any of that stuff. But you have to [as a T.O.C.]. You can’t do anything about it. It’s like students are not on task and you go up to them and tell them to open their books and all that stuff. Five minutes later, they’re doing nothing again. How many times do you keep saying that before you turn into a bag? They become obnoxious. “I don’t have to do anything. Why should I? You’re not my regular teacher.”

Kerri expresses a similar perception as she outlines a specific incident that concerned a student’s behaviour:

This kid was chirping me big time and wasn’t cooperating at all. “You’re not the teacher. I don’t have to listen to anything you say.” I thought “Excuse me. How can you get away with that? You can’t talk to me like that.” “I can do whatever I want” he says and he bounces away, kicking against the wall.

Ernie also indicates that students do not view T.O.C.s as having the same authority as the regular teacher. Ernie outlines that he feels frustrated dealing with students who treat him differently than they treat the regular teacher:

... they [students] don’t respect you too much. I’m sure they respect you but not at the level of a regular teacher. So it just makes the whole day difficult most of the time. ... you tell them to put the equipment away or stop doing something and it doesn’t carry the same weight as the regular teacher so it gets annoying. Then you get annoyed ragging on them, and then they get annoyed that you’re constantly on them when really, you should have said it once and they should have listened.
The lack of authority exhibited by students toward T.O.C.s appears to have a negative impact on the learning environment in the classroom. Janet, Kerri, and Ernie have indicated that students view a T.O.C. as having less authority than a regular teacher and that behaviour and academic norms may decline. Janet expresses that she is extremely frustrated when students do not respond to her efforts to get them on task:

... when students don’t do any work. They do nothing but yammer and when you try to get them to do something, they don’t listen. They don’t do anything. That’s probably the most frustrating thing.

Kerri’s experiences are similar to Janet’s as students have become less productive when she is in the classroom and have not responded to her directives. Consequently, it appears that Kerri has adopted her own strategy when her authority is questioned:

... they just don’t do anything, but I got to the point where I recognized they weren’t going to do anything and I just thought “I’m picking my battles and there’s no point in pushing these kids”. ... They open their book and maybe they’ll look and maybe they won’t but I’ve done my job.

Kerri recognizes that students may not work at the level they would with their regular teacher when a T.O.C. is in the classroom. Her previous comment indicates that students may put forth less effort when the T.O.C. is using directions or lesson plans left by the regular teacher. Kerri feels students will do even less if the T.O.C. assigns work during a class:

... I will say that sometimes if the teacher doesn’t give kids enough work, and it’s hard because if you give kids stuff, they’re not going to do it.

There is an indication from the participants that students do less work and provide less effort when a T.O.C. is in the classroom. It appears that students may view T.O.C.s as having less authority than the regular teacher and this results in a negative influence on the learning environment in the classroom.
All four participants provide insight into how the lack of T.O.C. authority in the classroom has implications on classroom management issues. Their comments refer to the lack of control a T.O.C. may experience in a classroom as a result of not being viewed as a legitimate authority figure in the school. Janet outlines that she feels students are aware of the limitations faced by a T.O.C.:

It's just, it's tough being a T.O.C. because there is only so much control you have. Because it's not your classroom and they know that, students know that. And they're constantly testing you.

Kerri has a similar perception as she explains that the lack of authority she experiences causes her to be selective when dealing with students:

So, I find that I let things slide more than I probably should. I have decided that I have to pick my battles. Just the lack of control, the feeling of slowly losing control is hard.

Kerri refers to feeling a loss of control in the classroom and Lynn appears to have the same perception. Lynn seems to adopt a passive approach that may indicate her perception that she has little, if any, classroom authority:

Stuff happens to you. You don’t make things happen. You just wait and see what the teacher has left or see how the kids treat you. There’s very little control.

Ernie feels students place little value on what a T.O.C. attempts to accomplish. He feels that the itinerant nature of T.O.C. teaching contributes to a T.O.C.’s lack of authority in the classroom:

They don’t see you often, they don’t really care if they fool around too much or if you get upset at them because they know it’s just going to be for that day usually. They won’t see you again.

It appears that the lack of T.O.C. authority in a classroom is evident by students viewing T.O.C.s as less of an authority figure than regular teachers. The perceived lack of authority expressed by the participants is evident in their view that students’ work
declines when a T.O.C. is present, classroom management issues may develop, and that generally, the participants experience a loss of control in the classroom.

**Common theme - Challenges with classroom management**

The common theme of classroom management is defined as the challenges faced by T.O.C.s in establishing and maintaining order in the classroom environment. It appears that classroom management issues may be the prime concern of the participants as many of the frustrations and challenges that they face on a daily basis are related to maintaining order in the classroom. The common theme of familiarity with the teaching environment, credibility of the T.O.C., and T.O.C. authority in the classroom appear to have a strong impact on classroom management issues faced by the participants. Each of the participants indicated that classroom management was an extremely challenging component of T.O.C. teaching.

**Classroom management as perceived focus of T.O.C. teaching**

Each participant stated that student behaviour and classroom management were important issues for them as T.O.C.s. The focus of their time in a classroom appears to be on management issues while pedagogical and instructional practices are of secondary importance.

After teaching as a T.O.C. for approximately three months, Janet’s view of the nature of T.O.C. teaching emphasizes the focus on student behaviour while alluding to students’ traditional views of T.O.C.s:

Behaviour. Totally, oh yeh. It’s all behaviour because just trying to get them to do work is probably the biggest thing because they don’t do it. They feel like they don’t have to when the sub’s there.
Kerri is equally adamant when explaining her perception of what the focus is for a T.O.C. in the classroom:

Definitely behaviour. ... I'm not complaining about it because that's just the way it works. ... You just have to roll with the punches and adapt. ... As a T.O.C., it's survival, just getting through the day.

Ernie indicates that he sees the importance of classroom management skills. His comments also recognize that he places less emphasis on instructional strategies when in the classroom:

Basically, it's just babysitting, you're just a warm body... classroom management is the main thing. Any class you go into, that's the thing. If you have classroom management skills, then what they [regular teacher] leave for you is pretty simple. ... you're not teaching them to split an atom, it's pretty easy. ... Work as a T.O.C. is so much classroom management....

Ernie had been T.O.C. teaching for approximately one month when he offered the above view of T.O.C. teaching. After T.O.C. teaching for approximately three months, Ernie’s view recognizes the impact that being familiar with a school and being recognized by students has on classroom management:

Yeh, if you've been in a school where you know the students, you do more teaching because they [students] don't really have to test you. They know what your limits are. The know about you so discipline, behaviour is not as big a deal. You can focus more on teaching. If I don't know a school, behaviour is number one, without a doubt....

Lynn’s perception of the focus of T.O.C. teaching is that there is a relationship between student behaviour and teaching effectiveness. However, when asked if T.O.C. teaching focused on student behaviour or teaching, her comments indicate that student behaviour is a preliminary focus of her T.O.C. teaching:

Half and half. The two of them [teaching and student behaviour] kind of work hand in hand. If the students are co-operative and there is no major disruption, then I can carry out the lesson plan as asked. ... If, for that one crazy class where the students were determined not to learn anything that day, I had almost spent
half the day disciplining. ... Behaviour and discipline, those are big issues for T.O.C.s.

Lynn’s perceptions of the focus of T.O.C. teaching appears to indicate that her activities as a T.O.C. depend heavily on the behaviour of the students. If she is fortunate, there will be no difficulties and she can meet the outlined instructional objectives. However, if her focus turns to dealing with student behaviour and discipline, her effectiveness as a teacher declines. Lynn’s general expectations when entering a classroom may provide a fitting conclusion to this section:

... I go in there expecting and assuming the worst because nine times out of ten that’s what happens. It becomes a free-for-all.

Perception of T.O.C. success as a function of student behaviour

The participants provided further insight into the importance of classroom management in their T.O.C. teaching when they indicated how they measured success as a T.O.C. Lynn, Ernie, and Kerri each explicitly equated success as a T.O.C. with keeping student behaviour under control while in the classroom. There was little indication that success was determined by the effectiveness of instructional strategies or academic progress of students.

Earlier Lynn had indicated that she felt she could carry out the lesson plan left by the regular teacher if student behaviour was relatively positive. She is more specific when outlining how she measures her success as a T.O.C. in the classroom:

So, I measure success in and have to consider how the rest of the day went in terms of [student] behaviour....

Ernie views success as a measure of finishing his assignment by any means necessary to minimize disruptions:
Just basically to try to be successful in some way. To get through the day. You have to use pretty much everything, every bag of tricks to somehow get through the day smoothly without any type of disruption. But you do what you have to do.

It appears that Ernie’s efforts and his view of success as a T.O.C. are focused on student behaviour and classroom management.

Kerri supports the views of Ernie and Lynn regarding T.O.C. success. She also views her success as a T.O.C. as a function of student behaviour:

... success is to keep my enthusiasm and to have the kids under control, too. Keep all the tables and chairs in one piece, windows not smashed.

Janet’s response focuses not only on managing student behaviour in the classroom, but also relates to T.O.C. credibility in the classroom. Janet explains her perception of success in the classroom as a T.O.C. as:

Um, when I’m up there and I ask for their attention and they listen. And if I say “No.” Like today, there was this Math class and I was just having a great old time of it. This is near the end of class and they just got their report cards and it’s like “Oh, I want to go talk to Ms. Nordan right now.” It’s like “No. You know lunch is in five minutes, you can wait until lunch rather than go in there and disrupt the class. ... I’m not going to let you go.” And he didn’t go. He tried. ... You know, it’s like they listen to you. And they take you seriously.

Lynn, Ernie, and Kerri indicate very clearly that they perceive their success as a T.O.C. to be a function of classroom management and student behaviour. Janet’s view relates to student behaviour but also recognizes that her credibility in the eyes of students plays a role in her success as a T.O.C.

**Establishing control in the classroom**

The participants each outlined individual strategies that they employ at the beginning of a class as a means to establish order in the classroom. Kerri indicates that she attempts to develop an understanding of the students’ behaviour as soon as possible:
And sometimes you can tell immediately if they’re going to be a problem and other times, you don’t think they are going to be a problem and by the end of the class, you’re doing everything in your power just to keep them in your class.

While Kerri may adopt more of a ‘reactive’ approach to managing student behaviour, Lynn, Janet, and Ernie appear to adopt a ‘proactive’ approach to student behaviour. They each attempt to establish an effective learning environment at the outset of the class. Lynn feels she needs to be in control while the students focus on academic tasks:

Control, and establishing some kind of structure with the students, getting them to settle down and get on task. That’s a big challenge.

Janet supports Lynn’s goal at the beginning of a class. She feels that it is important that students realize that she is in control of the class and that she will not be deterred by negative student behaviour:

I like to give the impression that I’m in control. I think students see that. They know that you know that things are just going to slide off so don’t even bother trying.

While Kerri, Lynn, and Janet provided brief insights into their views of establishing control in the classroom, Ernie was more detailed about his view of establishing classroom control:

The hardest thing about T.O.C.ing is basically the first five minutes of the class where you have to set the tone of the class. The kids read you just then, how you handle things. ... if you do a good job in those five minutes, the rest of the class should be pretty breezy. But if you screw up, or you look incompetent in those five minutes, they will eat you up....

Ernie outlines an experience with a class that illustrated that the beginning of the class is vital for him to establish control:

I didn’t come across as confident as I should have and it wasn’t a very good class. The first two minutes are the key. If you show any type of weakness, then you’re dead.
Ernie stresses the importance of the first few minutes of the class in order to establish control. He specifically outlines that in order to be successful in establishing control of student behaviour, he feels he must initially adopt a ‘tough’ stance:

Usually when you come in, your guard’s a little bit up when you don’t know the class and you have to be sort of authoritative at the beginning or else they [students] will walk all over you.

The participants indicate that they recognize that the beginning of the class is an important opportunity to establish control in the classroom. Lynn, Janet, and Ernie appear to feel they need to be proactive in dealing with student behaviour while Kerri appears to try to ‘read’ the class and react to the students’ behaviour.

Support for the T.O.C. when facing classroom management challenges

The participants indicate that although they are faced with classroom management challenges, it is generally viewed that the T.O.C. should be able to handle most situations. Apart from extreme situations that would result in a T.O.C. or regular teacher calling for administrative support, the participants outline that the T.O.C. should deal with classroom management situations on his/her own.

Ernie states that if a T.O.C. looks to others for assistance, it may be interpreted that the T.O.C. is lacking classroom management skills:

But, yeh, I think it looks like a weakness for most teachers. If you go up to a regular teacher and say, “I can’t handle this class”, what are they going to think? ... most of them are going to say “Learn to handle it or whatever.” So it’s probably a sign of weakness.

Ernie further develops his view that negative student behaviour which results in intervention by an administrator may not only be viewed as a weakness, it may also be embarrassing to the T.O.C.:
I’ve had a few times where I’ve let a student out to go to the washroom or something just because I give them the benefit of the doubt. Then I find out they’ve been fooling around a little bit and the vice-principal escorts them back to the room. You sort of look like a gumby when that happens.

Ernie did not provide a definition of a ‘gumby’ but it doesn’t appear to be flattering.

Kerri supports Ernie’s perception that asking for assistance with negative student behaviour is a sign of the T.O.C. being weak in classroom management. She stresses that even if a T.O.C. is encouraged to call for support or send students to the administration, it still portrays the T.O.C. as lacking classroom management skills:

I talked to the principal and he said “Next time you march on down to the principal’s office”, but you can’t. You can’t just leave your class, walk down to the principal’s office because it’s a sign that the T.O.C. can’t handle it. I don’t care if they tell you that or not, it’s still a sign that the T.O.C. can’t handle it. So, I still say that when you’re told to send the kid to the office, it reflects badly on you. Simple as that.

Janet adopts a stance similar to Ernie and Kerri. Janet explicitly states that she would rely on administrative support for a serious problem but she expects to deal with most situations herself:

I think generally, if, I think you view it as if a T.O.C. has to go to a VP, it must be serious. That’s the way I think because that’s the way I would use it. Now, there’s no other reason. If you can’t control the classroom, there’s a problem. It’s not the VP’s job.

Lynn’s perception of calling for assistance with classroom management issues is consistent with the views expressed by the other participants. Her view seems to mirror Janet’s understanding that some situations require assistance but generally, the T.O.C. should be able to handle most situations. Lynn specifically addresses the concept that calling for support is perceived as a sign of weakness:

Oh, I don’t know where that [a T.O.C. is weak if he/she calls for support] came from but for me I do feel that if you need to call someone, that means you can’t
handle it. But then I'm also aware that there are some students I can't handle. ... So, I guess it depends on the situation.

Lynn draws a connection between the challenges of classroom management and the common theme of lack of familiarity with the teaching environment. She outlines that as a T.O.C., she would find it helpful if there was a standard procedure in place for situations that may require administrative support. Essentially, just knowing that support is available or if she has to handle things herself would make classroom management less confusing for Lynn:

If I have a real behaviour problem, like a student who was getting so disruptive that I can't carry on with the lesson plan anymore, then I would like to know as a T.O.C. ... if there is some kind of standard procedure and if admin is or is not supportive, I would also like to know that. But I will just handle it by myself or, if I could send them to the counsellors, I'd be more than happy to do that too. ... I try to handle the situation on my own and not bother the admin because there are some schools that, they're either very supportive or they say “See your department head”. They don’t put it plainly on the call out assignment sheet that you are to handle things on your own but you can kind of feel either they direct it back to the office or they direct it to your department. So, that means they don't want anything to do with it. You have to read between the lines.

While all the participants indicate that seeking support from administration or counsellors for classroom management issues may be perceived as a weakness, Lynn and Kerri state that they are appreciative when support is offered. Kerri outlines a specific situation where a regular teacher provided assistance with a class:

Actually, ... the other day I had Grade 8s just bouncing off the walls last period of the day, they were everywhere. I was just going “Sit down and stop talking right now” because there was some work I wanted to do. Just then this male teacher walks by, ... and says “Do you want some help?” I said sure. He came in and flipped out on them. I thought he was joking and this one kid snickered. He hauled that kid out right away. It was awesome. They shut up and never spoke. ... So, I didn’t actually call for help but it was certainly nice to have someone else in there who the kids could associate with.
Kerri’s experience, in addition to illustrating the support offered her in that situation, also
draws a connection between the lack of T.O.C. familiarity with students and how that
may impact classroom management.

Although Lynn has indicated that she feels calling for assistance may be
perceived as a weakness, she expresses that she has been supported consistently by
teachers, counsellors, or administration when faced with a discipline problem. She
outlines a situation she faced with some students where she felt that she had the support
of others in the school:

I said I’m going to send so and so down. No problem. In fact, the teacher had left
the phone numbers for the counsellors so it was almost, you’re going to need this.
So, I send the first one [unruly student] off. Of course when I phone for the
second one [another unruly student], the counsellor isn’t there. ... so I phoned the
office and the office said I could send them down and they would find a
counsellor for me. So, I was very lucky to have the support. ... Anytime I have
had a discipline issue, I’ve had people back me up.

Example of classroom management situations faced by the participants

Each participant recognizes the challenges they face in terms of classroom
management as a T.O.C. They are faced with a variety of classroom management
situations on a daily basis. Janet outlines three situations that she has experienced as a
T.O.C. and she indicates that these incidents were relatively minor in nature. Her
comments illustrate the relationship between lack of T.O.C. familiarity with the teaching
environment and classroom management for T.O.C.s:

The biggest thing that I’ve had is this one kid ... I had him in a science class. He
asked “Can I go to the washroom?” and he leaves for about a half an hour and he
doesn’t come back. When he came back, I asked him “It took you a half an hour
to go to the washroom and it’s across the hall?” Oh blah, blah, blah, they always
have a million excuses prepared.

There’s like, they would just kind of leave the classroom without even telling me.
It was “Whoa, what’s going on here? What does your regular teacher do?” I
mean, is this acceptable?” The reply is usually “I just went to the washroom. It’s just right there.” “I don’t care, you have to tell me where you go because I need to keep track of where you are.” And that was really frustrating just trying to get them to tell me when they’re leaving the classroom. That was annoying.

And, it’s like today, they did the old switch seat thing and I totally got burned when I found out. It’s funny, the whole class is listening. Everybody’s always listening to see what you are going to do, always testing. ... no-one has actually sworn at me in class ... or anything like that. Nothing that extreme. Um, other that that, a few isolated incidents, nothing that major.

Ernie provides examples of classroom management situations that illustrate challenges he has been faced with since beginning as a T.O.C.:

Most of the time you don’t know who the behaviour, bad behaviour kids are so that sometimes it just escalates. Then the kids mouth you off or ... I had that once with Mr. Doe’s class with John and Jim. I came in one time and they just didn’t want anything to do with my discipline so ... I had to send them to the office. They flip the finger at you or they swear at you and it’s like ... sometimes that’s pretty bad.

Ernie’s experience draws a connection to the lack of T.O.C. familiarity with the teaching environment that is similar to Janet’s experiences. In this case, he feels he could have dealt with the students’ negative behaviour if he had known who may have been a behaviour concern in the class.

Ernie also explains how he reacted when he was re-assigned to a class that had been extremely troublesome for him the previous day:

I actually was requested to go back to that school to do that same class and I first said “Is there another school I can go to?” but the call board lady said it was policy that if you’re requested, you have to go there. So I said yes. Then I called the call board back five minutes later and said “I’m going to take the day off rather than go there again.” I didn’t want to deal with that class again. That was the first time I had ever copped out of going to a class but I just didn’t want to deal with anything like that again.

Rather than deal with the negative situation with that particular class again, Ernie elected to forfeit a day’s pay. This is not a usual response for Ernie as he attempts to give the
impression that he deals well with classroom management challenges, as shown in how he reacted to the experience with one particular class:

... it [the class] was pretty much a disaster. ... I left a note for Mr. Jones saying that everything went smoothly. I did not want to tell him that I had trouble with behaviour. I said it went really well. But, I didn’t want anything to tarnish, I wanted to be known as someone who could handle anything, which I can most of the time. But you can’t handle everything.

In reflecting further on the various classroom management situations that he has experienced as a T.O.C., Ernie recognizes that a T.O.C. experiences highs and lows when faced with a variety of classroom situations:

Some days you don’t have as much patience. You say “O.K., I have to try to leave everything behind. I can’t bring anything from outside into this.” But that’s so tough. If you have a bad day or whatever, sometimes your fuse isn’t as long. You try your best.

Kerri has worked as a T.O.C. more regularly in elementary schools than the other three participants and her experiences in elementary schools appear to affect her in an interesting manner:

I love secondary, don’t get me wrong. Um, it’s true that when I finish T.O.C.ing in secondary, I’m not half as happy when I teach elementary. My room-mate is the one who put me onto that. She finally turned to me in the kitchen and said “You are so happy when you come home from elementary and you’re such a grump when you come home from secondary.”

Kerri indicates that as a T.O.C., she generally focuses her efforts on a portion of the entire class. Perhaps this contributes to her frustration at the secondary level as she deals with several groups of students each day, while at the elementary level, she may spend the day with one group of students:

And as a T.O.C. ... I think the ones that stand out are the bad kids. So, we don’t see the good ones’ work, we don’t see the ones who are actually nice in class and good in discussions because it’s the bad ones we have to watch.
Although Kerri indicated that she may find elementary classes more enjoyable to T.O.C. teach than secondary classes, her challenges with classroom management are not limited to her secondary assignments. She outlines an experience with an elementary class that was a challenge to deal with:

Sometimes I feel like I'm going to scream. I have a Grade Seven class where I love the kids but they're just so loud. They showed no respect for me whatsoever and that was over four days and it's hard because you hear yourself losing control. You're trying to be calm and after awhile, you run out options in your head.

Just as Janet, Ernie, and Kerri have had to deal with challenging classroom management situations, Lynn has faced her share of difficult classroom experiences. In one particular example, she manages to maintain her sense of humour when recounting events:

It was a small class, maybe eight boys, all boys too. They just didn't want to do any of the work that the teacher had left. ... None of them wanted to do anything but make paper airplanes out of the worksheets. Origami in resource. ... None of them had brought any supplies, so I had to go next door to get some supplies for them. The teacher had locked her drawers and that's a sign. ... If everything's locked, there's a reason for that. ... As soon as I left, the door slammed and they tried to lock me out but I had my keys. These eight boys tried to lock me out [Lynn laughs] and that was just the beginning of the period [she continues to laugh]. I got back inside and I kind of knew who was the leader of the little rebellion and I eventually had to send two of them to the counsellor because they were not going to co-operate.

Lynn was able to react to the challenges posed by this group of boys and utilized others in the school to help her deal with a unique classroom management situation. She describes another classroom management challenge that she faced and in this case, she shows the growth she has experienced as a T.O.C. who has been T.O.C. teaching for several months:

... there were three boys who tried to cause a rebellion in class. ... But these three, you could just tell they were trying to make the period as difficult as possible. Interrupt you constantly ... I was very new, I think it was my first or
second month T.O.C.ing. Now, if that ever happens again, they’d be out immediately. I wouldn’t stand for even one kind of deliberate interruption .... I don’t know why or how I endured with that or tolerated any of that because it’s an automatic trip to the office. Just like swearing, I should have treated it like that because the rest of the class, the other twenty five kids were ready and willing to learn something. It was a lesson for me. I ended up not really giving any consequences to the individuals. What I did was have the whole class stay and I now know not to do that because it just causes resentment with the rest. It worked for me as a last resort because I hadn’t disciplined them during the class, I just kept speaking to them. Then, I separated them and spoke to them outside and that didn’t work. That was something for me to learn. Not to do that to the whole class.

Janet, Kerri, Ernie, and Lynn have faced a myriad of classroom management situations while teaching as T.O.C.s. Their experiences have forced them to deal with negative student behaviour in an environment that may provide little support or direction. While support from administration or others in the school may be available to assist with classroom management issues, the participants may not be familiar with the procedures to access that support, or may elect to deal with situations in isolation. Each participant indicated that asking for assistance with classroom management issues reflects negatively on T.O.C.s. Generally, classroom management appears to be a daily, practical concern for T.O.C.s.

Classroom management perceptions held by the participants

In exploring the perceptions of the participants of classroom management issues faced by T.O.C.s, the participants outline how classroom management challenges impact their efforts in the classroom. Lynn indicates that classroom management issues are one area of T.O.C. teaching that she generally feels unprepared for:

... sometimes, I feel unprepared for the unforeseen, the odd student I have to send to the office, or not prepared for major disruptions, a student who is really testing you and starts a little clique that wants to lead a rebellion in your class, that happened once. ... not unprepared for kids acting up, that’s expected, that’s a given. It’s what they choose to do to you that day, if they are going to set the
classroom on fire or puncture your car tires or whatever they threaten to do or look like they are up to. You can never be prepared for behaviour challenges.

Kerri provides an overview of classroom management issues as one of the
negatives that she has experienced as a T.O.C.:

Um, it seems all I ever do is talk about the negative stuff. I feel bad about that. ... The classroom management that you have to deal with that you wouldn’t normally have to deal with.

Kerri appears to be making a comparison between the classroom management issues faced by a regular teacher and those faced by a T.O.C.

Janet outlines that she has decided that as a T.O.C., she realizes it is unrealistic to expect that students will respond or co-operate if she adopts a rigid stance on discipline:

There’s only so much control that you have and I think if you try to assume that you have more control, I think you’re going to be screwed because ... if you have these hard set rules as a T.O.C., like nobody’s going to talk during the class, you can’t leave the room for any reason, I think you’ve got to be more laid back and relax a little bit.

Ernie’s perceptions are somewhat similar to Janet’s and Kerri’s views. First, Ernie recognizes that his effectiveness as a T.O.C. may be limited and like Janet, he feels he should adapt his objectives when in the classroom. However, while Janet focuses on classroom management, Ernie seems to focus on instructional effectiveness:

I’ve learned that some days it’s not as tough as I thought. But some days I’ve learned it’s much more difficult, much harder than I thought. ... The biggest thing is if you go in there trying to think you’re going to be this great Messiah, trying to teach these students something, you’re just going to fall flat on your face most of the time.

Ernie also reflects Kerri’s view that a T.O.C. faces classroom management situations that are different from those faced by regular teachers. Ernie argues that this is largely due to the fact that the students don’t know the T.O.C. as they do a regular teacher:
They [students] talk back to you a little bit and that gets you a little annoyed but you learn, you don’t take it but you just understand that these kids, they don’t really know who you are so .... You give a little bit of leniency but they shouldn’t be treating anyone like that. It’s a different situation but what are you going to do? You can make a mountain out of a molehill if you start getting mad at every kid for not respecting you. You’d be there the whole day ... sometimes you have to have a thick skin and just take it, ignore it, let it bounce off of you. If I was a regular teacher, no way. Then you have their marks or the phone call home so ... but as a T.O.C., you don’t really have any leverage.

Ernie’s comment appears to summarize many of the factors that contribute to the variety of classroom issues faced by T.O.C.s.

**Common theme - Indifferent treatment of the T.O.C. as a professional**

The theme of treatment of T.O.C.s by regular teaching staff is defined here as how the participants perceive the regular staff in schools accept T.O.C.s as colleagues. Generally, the participants all indicate that their time spent in schools can be an isolating experience. They indicate that they don’t feel welcome in school staff rooms, and that regular teachers may not treat them with the respect due to a teaching colleague.

**Participants’ perception of feeling unwelcome in schools**

The participants clearly state that they often do not feel very welcome in the school setting. Lynn indicates that she often feels unwelcome when arriving at a school:

... I remember going into, walking into offices where immediately it felt like an igloo and all eyes went either to the ceiling or to the floor. You just felt like ... I really didn’t feel welcomed in some schools.

Janet’s perception of how she feels going into a school is similar to Lynn’s view. They both indicate that generally, they feel like outsiders who are, to a degree, avoided by others. However, Janet outlines that the staff members she works with during the day are more welcoming than the rest of the staff. Janet explains her perception of how she, as a T.O.C., is welcomed by staff:
Like some outsider I think. It's because most of the time, they won't talk to you ...
if you go into the staff room, everybody knows who is not part of the staff.
And generally, no one says anything to you but I find within the department that
you are in for ... they're usually quite nice. It's just sort of everyone else in the
school, you're just a fly on the wall. You're not even there, you don't exist.

Lynn and Janet allude to the theme of lack of familiarity as not only is the T.O.C.
unfamiliar with the teaching environment, the school staff is unfamiliar with the T.O.C.
and may be unwilling to make time to welcome the T.O.C. to the school.

Ernie seems to be extremely frustrated by the situation as outlined by Lynn and
Janet. While he perceives a different reason for the lack of interaction between T.O.C.s
and regular staff, Ernie also indicates that part of the reason staff is less welcoming to
T.O.C.s is the theme of lack of familiarity. Ernie feels that because staff members do not
know the T.O.C., there is very little interaction:

As a T.O.C., I didn't think anybody could be any lower than a student teacher, but
a T.O.C. is pretty close. ... you go into a school, unless you know the teachers,
on one talks to you really. They don't care to talk to you. You can almost get a
sense of a hierarchical position when they have the big contract and you're still
struggling to get that, so you're inferior in that sense. There's a little bit of an
inferiority complex. That's what I think. Some schools are better than others in
terms of treatment of T.O.C.s. But on the whole it's pretty much the same, which
makes sense I guess because you don't know anyone and they don't know you
from a hole in the ground. Basically, so you just have very little socialization.

Lynn, Janet, and Ernie have outlined that they generally do not feel welcomed in
the schools in which they T.O.C. teach. Much of their time in schools may not involve
interaction with other staff members and all participants indicate that this feeling is
amplified by the dynamics of the school staff room. As she attempts to explain her
perceptions of how the staff treats T.O.C.s, Janet makes reference to what could be
termed the 'staff room ghost syndrome':

How the staff treats you or don't treat you ... You know, you sometimes feel like
a ghost walking into the staffroom.
Kerri explains that she effectively avoids the staff room and uses the time on her own to help herself deal with the day’s challenges:

I generally stay in the classroom, I get work done. ... Sometimes I need that time just to sit back for myself, reassess, sometimes get ready for the next class. Going into the staff room in the secondary [school] is very intimidating because people have their spots.

Lynn’s perception of the staff room experience supports the views of Janet and Kerri. Lynn uses her staff room experience to illustrate that T.O.C.s are not treated as equals by the regular staff:

I’ve learned that T.O.C.s are not regarded or treated as equals among the staff and it is very apparent as soon as you walk into the staff room. You see that nobody really wants you to sit next to them or at their table. There’s a body language that you’re only here for a day, you don’t really belong to us so you go have lunch on your own. Nothing is ever spoken but you do feel it.

Lynn further outlines her staff room perceptions and in this case, defines it as a negative aspect of her T.O.C. experience:

... you don’t really feel like you belong. You’re like a visitor even though you are staff, you’re a teacher but you don’t feel, like unwelcomed is a strong word but often when I walk into a staff room, that’s how I feel. It’s a negative because you don’t get to make any friends.

Ernie reflects the perceptions of Janet, Kerri, and Lynn as he indicates that he spends little time with others when he is at a school:

So, you just basically stay in the classroom or at lunch time, I never go to the staff room, unless I know someone at the school. Usually, stay in the PE office or go out for lunch and then return shortly before the bell and teach and as soon as the bell rings, if there is nothing to do and you’ve done everything and left everything nice, then turn in your key and go. It’s not a very warm atmosphere. It’s just in and out basically.

There is a general perception among the participants that the regular staff may not be very welcoming of T.O.C.s. In addition, the participants have outlined a variety of
experiences that may contribute to the perceptions that regular staff do not treat T.O.C.s as professional colleagues.

**Incidents with regular teachers that are perceived as unprofessional by participants**

Janet outlines that she feels frustrated that some regular teachers may take advantage of T.O.C.s when T.O.C.s are replacing another teacher:

I think sometimes teachers like to take advantage of T.O.C.s. Like, the spare switching and stuff like that. ... that is so unfair. We were told in Rutherford ... we were not supposed to be doing this. They [teachers] know that they’re not supposed to do that ....

Spare switching, as mentioned by Janet, refers to the practice where a T.O.C. is replacing a regular teacher who has a spare block at some point during the day. Another teacher will have the T.O.C. cover his/her class and then take advantage of the spare block. Consequently, the T.O.C. covers more classes than the assignment for that day requires.

Janet has had an experience with a regular teacher who appeared to be taking advantage of her presence in the school. She was visibly upset as she recounted the experience:

And I’ll tell you a situation that really kind of bothered me once. I went to a school .... I go there in the morning and the teacher’s there because he’s in a meeting. I go to the classroom and he says “You know, I didn’t realize this but you’re actually not teaching the first block. You’re not teaching all morning. You don’t teach until after lunch.” ... It’s like, O.K., but he says, and he’s got this all typewritten, “To help me catch up, do you think you could do this marking for me?” And I had to make up the keys for some of these things and so, I’m doing this marking and he’s got this stack ... and none of these marks have been recorded. “Can you record all these marks on this sheet?” And then, “Do all this photocopying for me?” "Are you sure you don’t mind?” he says. What do you want me do say? Yeh, I do mind and I think you’re a jerk. ... It’s mighty expensive on your part to get a T.O.C. to help you catch up on your marking. Yeh, whatever. That really annoyed me. ... It really made me angry. What do I do? ... and you know, he had it all typed out. It’s like you [the teacher] tell me you didn’t realize I wouldn’t be teaching before I came, that’s bull. You did know otherwise you wouldn’t have had time to type it.
Janet obviously feels that the regular teacher in this instance was taking advantage of her and in doing so, put her in an awkward and frustrating situation where she was treated as a unit of labour rather than a teaching colleague.

Ernie feels strongly that the relationship between regular teachers and T.O.C.s is a cause for concern. He indicates that regular teachers may not regard T.O.C.s as teaching colleagues and do not offer T.O.C.s the respect they deserve:

Um, my biggest concern is just how T.O.C.s are thought of in the teaching profession. ... That’s my biggest concern because when a lot of teachers get the continuing contract, they start bad mouthing T.O.C.s. They automatically assume that role as the teacher with the continuing contract and they automatically have that superior/inferior thing. ... then they think that as a T.O.C., that is what you have to go through. You have to go through that stuff [T.O.C. challenges], that’s what T.O.C.s put up with. I just don’t think that T.O.C.s, they have done five years of university, countless hours of volunteer stuff ... they deserve so much respect and for teachers not to help with that ... I just think that’s pretty bad.

Ernie’s frustration with the way T.O.C.s are regarded by regular teachers appears to be based on his perception that T.O.C.s are not respected by regular teachers. As noted earlier, he wonders about the lack of respect afforded T.O.C.s by regular teachers on several occasions:

What I’m getting at is that some regular teachers don’t treat the T.O.C.s with tons of respect. If a student misbehaves in a T.O.C.s class, it shouldn’t be brushed off. I think it should be dealt with because down the line, the kids just get the attitude that you can take advantage of T.O.C.s.

Ernie’s perception of regular teachers treating T.O.C.s with a lack of respect is a contentious issue for him. Perhaps his view has been formed to a degree by an incident he had with a regular teacher:

Some [regular teachers] don’t respect you. Some don’t respect you as if you were a regular teacher but ... for example, yesterday I was at a school and in between classes I had to go to the washroom. The bell rings, the final bell goes and I was about two minutes late to get out and take attendance for my class. So, I walk into the gym and one of the regular teachers looks at his watch and gives me a
dirty look. I said I was in the washroom and he said he didn’t care. Stuff like that is a little disheartening. ... Most of it is just respect.

To an extent, much of what the participants have indicated about a perceived lack of regard from regular teachers may be related to the common theme of lack of familiarity. Ernie indicates that his interactions with regular teachers at a school he is accustomed to are much more professionally rewarding. He feels he is treated like a professional when other teachers in the school know him:

... when I’m at Parker, not only do I know just about every teacher at Parker because I was there for my practicum .... It makes you feel nice [when they know you], it makes you feel like a professional colleague rather than a substitute. And they talk to you, they ask you questions, “Do you know anything about ...?” That’s nice, that makes you feel like a professional.

Kerri supports Ernie’s view that having the opportunity to know the regular teachers alleviates much of the frustrations T.O.C.s may feel due to being unfamiliar with the staff. Kerri outlines a situation where a regular teacher invited and then escorted her to an informal department gathering during recess, Kerri viewed this experience as a very positive act by the teacher:

... what she did was very, very nice. It gets your face in there which is very hard for a T.O.C. Well, it’s hard for me to walk into a room and go “Hi!” I suppose it shouldn’t be but there are just some days where you just don’t want to. You get tired of always putting yourself out there and sometimes you just want to hide. So, for her to come and get me was really nice. I got to meet people and staff so that was good.

Lynn echoes the perceptions of Ernie and Kerri that personal contact with the staff at a school makes the T.O.C. experience more enjoyable. Lynn has a simple suggestion for how a regular teacher could make a T.O.C. feel more welcome:

It really makes a difference if the staff can be welcoming of the T.O.C., to extend a hand, to smile, to be a little friendly.
Lynn develops her view that a friendly face can make all the difference to a T.O.C. when she recounts an incident somewhat similar to Kerri’s experience:

One school that I walked into one day, I didn’t know where the classroom was. ... As I was walking down to the staff room to ask anybody where this place was, this teacher was coming out so I just crossed paths with her and she recognized me right away as a T.O.C. and identified herself and walked me to the classroom I was supposed to be at. ... She just prepped me in that three minutes that it took to walk to the classroom but she wanted to make sure that I felt comfortable and safe. ... If that was replicated in half the staff even, I think that would make a T.O.C.’s day, or maybe their week go by that much better.

The participants indicate that generally, they feel unwelcome in many schools and that the regular staff may not treat them as teaching colleagues. This perception appears to be a frustration for each participant. However, it was also suggested that the regular staff can make a T.O.C. feel much more comfortable and welcome at a school merely by making an effort to include the T.O.C. in discussions or by offering assistance during the T.O.C.’s time in the school. Essentially, many of the perceptions held by the participants about their treatment from regular staff relate to unfamiliarity of the teaching environment. The more familiar the participants are with the schools they teach in and staff they teach with, they may feel more welcome and more comfortable and, perhaps, more effective as a T.O.C.

Common theme - Lack of exposure to T.O.C. teaching in teacher education (preservice) programs

The participants feel a degree of frustration relating to the lack of exposure to the realities of T.O.C. teaching in their teacher education programs. The participants seem to recognize that addressing the realities of T.O.C. teaching should, at least, be a component of existing teacher education courses. Lynn explains that as she spent more time in
schools as a T.O.C., she realized that she felt somewhat unprepared for some of the challenges she was facing:

At first, I was just very naive thinking that [discipline problems with students] never happens. You know, I would just go in and do my job. I guess as time went last year I started to realize I had this feeling of, not urgency, but I thought I don’t know what to do. It wasn’t a panic, but a concern because they don’t tell you this in PDP, you don’t get a course on how to handle things when you’re a T.O.C.

Janet’s perception is that the teacher education program that she was involved with provided little direction for classroom management issues. This may reflect the value that Janet places on maintaining classroom order when she T.O.C. teaches as her concern with her pre-service program focuses on the lack of classroom management instructions:

In pre-service training you get no classroom management stuff at all. I don’t know if it was just the science part or whatever, there is nothing. And you know, that’s like the biggest thing as a T.O.C., is classroom management. There’s nothing to that effect. ... There’s nothing now, that’s really annoying.

Janet offers a suggestion to provide classroom management strategies to pre-service teachers:

I would make it [classroom management] a mandatory portion in any course in teacher education. ... I mean, two hours a week on classroom management, that would make a huge difference I think. ... Classroom management is such a big thing with teaching and they don’t even touch it.

Ernie indicates that much of the T.O.C. discussion during his pre-service program was generated by his fellow students and although T.O.C. teaching was discussed, he felt more could have been accomplished. Ernie recognizes that for many of his peers, T.O.C. teaching was going to be a reality:

... there were a few people in my class that wanted more T.O.C. stuff. They wanted to talk about it more and we did for a little bit but not as much as we could have. Most people, I’m not sure about tech areas that seem to be more in demand,
are going to be T.O.C.ing, so I think they [teacher education programs] should have a class about T.O.C. stuff.

Kerri echoes the views of Lynn and Janet but her evaluation of her pre-service program is much more severe:

They [teacher education program] didn’t do anything. They didn’t even address how to teach let alone how to be a T.O.C. It was a terrible program. The odd things I thought were good but very few.

Despite her obvious dissatisfaction with her pre-service program, Kerri does outline that some aspects were worthwhile. She does note a positive experience that was arranged as part of her student teaching practicum in order to address T.O.C. teaching:

T.O.C. work was addressed a bit. Our faculty advisor has us switch for a day with different schools. I thought it was a really good idea .... I thought it was a pretty good idea and I liked going to the other school because I forgot what it was like to walk into a classroom where I didn’t know anyone. It was a very good idea.

Although Ernie was not provided the same experience that Kerri had during her practicum to experience a day as a T.O.C., he expresses that such an experience would help him appreciate aspects of T.O.C. teaching:

... it would be neat if you could simulate a T.O.C. day. ... If they simulated ... and picked a few schools in the area and brought a faculty advisor ... to observe and had you work as a T.O.C., even for a period. ... that would be beneficial.

While Kerri and Ernie outline practical steps incorporated as part of the pre-service practicum that would address T.O.C. teaching, Lynn indicates that there are some measures that she would like to see incorporated into aspects of pre-service courses. Lynn’s view is more broad in comparison to Janet’s but they both reflect a desire to see aspects of T.O.C. teaching addressed as a formal component of teacher education programs:

If it could be incorporated into any of the education classes or have T.O.C.s ... brought in. ... If they [professors] don’t have the resources, at least they could
invite some experts who are now in the field doing this kind of thing. ... It
doesn’t have to be a whole course on being a T.O.C. but just fit it in somewhere
....

The participants all see a need for T.O.C. teaching, or components of T.O.C.
teaching such as classroom management, to be discussed and explored in pre-service
teacher education programs.

Participants’ reflections on how school districts, schools, and regular teachers can
improve the T.O.C. experience and/or T.O.C. effectiveness

School districts

The participants express that there are a variety of issues that they have as T.O.C.s
in the employ of various school districts. In reflecting on how a school district can
support T.O.C.s, the participants indicate that issues such as funding for professional
development opportunities, orientations to T.O.C. teaching, employee benefits, call-out
procedures, and evaluation were areas that districts could address more effectively.

Several participants outline their frustration with the nature of district support for
professional development opportunities. It seems that Janet, Kerri, and Ernie recognize
that there are opportunities for T.O.C.s to attend various activities but the districts do not
provide any financial compensation for missing teaching days in order to attend. Janet
recognizes that some districts will pay for the professional development activity but the
T.O.C. will lose pay for the day missed:

... a new thing for Rutherford, you can get funding to go to professional
development days. They’ll pay for them but you have to apply for them like
teachers do. ... They provide you with money to go to these things but you don’t
get paid for the day off like regular teachers do.
Kerri shares a similar concern:

... I am going to the Clearwater one [Pro-D Day] because they’re having their big
district one in two weeks. I’m very excited about it actually. ... I’m looking
forward to it but, it’s a day of pay gone. It’s a sacrifice.

Ironically, Ernie had the opportunity to attend an event welcoming him to a
district as a new teacher but it appears attending would have cost him a day’s pay:

... there was supposed to be a thing where I was going to get some certificate
about being new to the district. ... I think it was actually during a day when I
could get work. See, you go to the meeting and you lose $145. ... I didn’t want
to lose my money.

Ernie also mentions that he finds it difficult as a T.O.C. to be informed about various
professional development activities because he has no permanent base and moves from
school to school:

... there’s no real home base for a T.O.C. In a staff room you can always take a
look ... and see what’s going on but usually you miss things ....

The participants express a frustration concerning professional development
opportunities. Their frustration may be due to the perception that they are not afforded
the same financial support that regular teachers are provided for professional
development pursuits.

Each of the T.O.C.s in this study had participated in orientations with various
school districts where they were required to complete paperwork and received
information about the district. It appears that district orientations vary and the
participants were left with differing opinions of the various districts. Ernie explains that
he felt the Richmond School District provided a useful orientation:

They [districts] had orientations for you but it was mostly filling out paperwork.
... Just run of the mill stuff about the district. ... Richmond was similar, Gore’s
was pretty haphazard, it wasn’t too professional. Richmond was more
professional. ... They made you feel nice to be chosen as a T.O.C. in Richmond.
Lynn supports Ernie’s view of the Richmond orientation as she compares her Richmond experience to her experience with the St. Kilda School District:

... I think this is an attractive characteristic in Richmond, there’s the workshop at the end of August for newly hired T.O.C.s and beginning teachers. We had a full day workshop ... and had the opportunity to meet some of the people we had heard about in person. That for me really made the experience better because you’re connecting with the board you are working for now. Whereas in St. Kilda, I still don’t know who some of these figures are who make all the decisions. The human touch, Richmond has that down pat. It’s been a really welcoming experience. ... When I was hired by the St. Kilda district, we got very little training or orientation. ... So, in that respect in St. Kilda, I didn’t feel I was treated like a very important part of their district.

Although Ernie and Lynn feel that the orientation offered by the Richmond School District was helpful and made them feel valued as a T.O.C. in Richmond, Ernie notes that as far as he is aware “There hasn’t been anything formal since the orientations.”

The participants may appreciate the effort of district personnel to provide a practical, helpful orientation where T.O.C.s have the opportunity to meet the district staff involved with the employment and assignment of T.O.C.s. However, the participants appear to recognize that they would like to be afforded professional development opportunitites similar to that which regular teachers may receive.

Janet and Kerri express their frustration with an economic issues that appears to be associated with T.O.C. teaching. While regular teachers receive a benefits package through their employment with the school districts that Kerri and Janet teach as T.O.C.s, T.O.C.s in those districts do not receive any benefits. Janet was quite agitated when she explains her view:

I want benefits. ... It’s not really fair. We’re an employee of the district as well. Teachers can’t survive without a T.O.C., otherwise they wouldn’t get sick days. We don’t get any of those sick days or other things that regular teachers get.
Kerri offers:

And no one is looking after me if I get sick. ... I'm dying to get dental. I have medical, actually, I don't know if I have medical anymore. I've got to find out about that, I make too much money now. I would like to have dental, or sick pay. Just give us some sick pay days. I'm so paranoid about breaking a leg but I'd go anyway. I need the money. ... There are no benefits and that would be nice.

Ernie raises the issue of feedback for T.O.C.s from regular teachers. He infers that he would appreciate some comments on how he handled a class as he feels a form of evaluation would assist him in improving his classroom effectiveness:

Maybe praise, a little bit or constructive criticism. Like you're doing a really good job or if they [district] phone the teacher and ask how the T.O.C. did while in the class. Maybe just a note. ... It's so impersonal sometimes.

Ernie and Lynn provide some insight into the methods of T.O.C. assignment that are utilized in the various districts that employ them as T.O.C.s. Some districts use a computerized call-out system while others have district personnel contact T.O.C.s. Ernie outlines, in a brief yet strong comment, that he views a phone call from an individual relating to his T.O.C. assignment in a serious manner as "it's pretty much a job where your boss is actually the other person on the line." Ernie's perception of the importance of the district T.O.C. personnel raises a number of issues related to the call-out methods used by districts, T.O.C. seniority in a district, and regular teachers requesting T.O.C.s for their classes.

T.O.C. issues such as availability of benefits for T.O.C.s and call-out procedures are controversial in various B.C. school districts (Fodor, 1990). While beyond the scope of this study, these issues require further investigation.
As they reflected on their T.O.C. experiences, each participant offered brief suggestions on how a school could contribute to improving the T.O.C. experience. Lynn’s response reflects the common theme of how T.O.C.s are treated by members of the teaching profession as she indicates she feels a more personal atmosphere would be a benefit:

... it is again a human touch. ... And to offer, to verbally offer support. ... Or just that friendly smile or that if you need anything, don’t hesitate to call one of our VPs. ... if it is reinforced verbally, then you feel they mean it and they want to help you. It really makes a difference if the staff can be welcoming of the T.O.C., to extend a hand, a smile, to be a little friendly.

Ernie feels that a more welcoming atmosphere in schools is important but he also puts an emphasis on support from others in the school when dealing with challenging classroom management situations:

... check up on you when they know you’re in a class that’s notorious for having behaviour problems. ... And to say out loud for the T.O.C. to call if there are any problems. ... I think that other than that, just some friendly hellos, that’s just about it.

Kerri supports Ernie’s view that support for classroom management challenges is helpful. Her comment also stresses the connection between the common themes of classroom management and lack of T.O.C. familiarity with the teaching environment:

... there’s only been a couple of schools, Pinarello I believe, no, Banesto, which had a little T.O.C. folder that had discipline problems. It was really helpful because I knew names and that helps.

Janet’s perception of what would benefit a T.O.C. in a school focuses on improving T.O.C. familiarity with routines and procedures in the school:

... they have a little booklet for every teacher. In this booklet they have all the procedures that happen in a day. ... In the same booklet that particular teacher had all the class lists ... there are notes from the teacher saying such and such a
person is a good helper ... this is what we do and that kind of thing. ... they have it in the office already and they just give it to you. I thought it was really good.

The participants’ suggestions relating to how a school could make the T.O.C. experience more effective or enjoyable appear to reflect aspects noted in the common themes.

**Teachers**

The participants’ perceptions of how teachers can contribute to improving T.O.C. effectiveness in the classroom appear to be related closely to the common theme of T.O.C. familiarity with the teaching environment. Generally, the participants express that they feel better prepared to face the challenges of T.O.C. teaching when they are aware of the material to be covered and what the rules and procedures are in the classroom.

Lynn outlines that she would ask that regular teachers leave clear instructions and a seating plan to help her to be more effective:

I think clear instructions. Complete because when a teacher leaves everything that they say they are going to leave on their desk, that just makes the day go much better. Complete lesson plans. ... Be specific. ... be specific, be brief, and be complete. That’s all you need really. ... Oh yeah, seating plans.

Janet echoes Lynn’s view that teachers leave clear instructions and she adds that specifically, she appreciates insight into classroom rules and procedures:

Tell me what the rules of the classroom are. Tell me what the rules are, give me a seating plan. ... Just let me know what the deal is and if you’re doing a lab, let me know where the materials are and just rules I think would be really helpful.

Kerri also expresses the need for clear instructions, class lists, and appropriate teacher expectations for tasks completed by the students:

If I’m T.O.C.ing for you, just clear instructions, lots of things for the kids to do. ... and make it due. Like none of this “Here, do the questions in the textbook and you have two days to do it” because they don’t do it. ... leave attendance rolls.
... You don’t want to be hunting or searching. Don’t have too many concepts that are different.

Ernie’s view reflects Kerri’s request that the regular teacher leaves enough work for students and that the work is prepared so a T.O.C. can deal with other challenges. Ernie’s comment also briefly mentions that he would like to contribute to the learning environment in the classroom:

Just to have the day done for you, what you want them [students] to do, that it fills up the whole time. But in a way that the T.O.C. can help. ... The last thing you want to worry about is what they are going to do during class. ... Just have it ready for them [T.O.C.] so that it just makes it smoother because there are so many more obstacles.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the participants feel that regular teachers, school staff, and administration can make the T.O.C. experience more enjoyable simply by making contact with the T.O.C. in a positive, helpful manner.

**Participants’ perception of the positives associated with their T.O.C. experience**

Participants often found that they focused on aspects of T.O.C. teaching that they perceived to be frustrating, or negative. However, upon reflection of their T.O.C. experience, each participant identifies aspects of T.O.C. teaching that he/she felt were positive.

Several participants indicate that they enjoy the opportunity to be involved in a variety of districts, schools, and classrooms. Lynn feels that she has developed a deeper appreciation for the teaching profession by observing a variety of educational settings:

I was able to observe quite a few different classrooms and different teachers’ styles and just a lot of soaking that in and getting a feel for ... how different teachers function and do things in their school, how administration handles things differently. I think if I had not had that T.O.C. experience, I probably wouldn’t appreciate the profession as much. ... I would never have got a chance to run around twenty-eight different schools and see the variety and see the pros and cons and the pluses and minuses.
Kerri is very enthusiastic in her view of the positive nature of observing different schools and having the flexibility of working with various grade levels and subject areas. However, despite her enthusiasm, she appears to feel that regular teaching is her preference:

I love going to the different schools, I love the flexibility, I love doing Art one day and Special Education another day, Kindergarten one day.... I like going to the different schools, I like the kids but it’s definitely not the same as being a [regular] teacher.

Janet appreciates the variety offered by T.O.C. teaching and views challenges offered by T.O.C. teaching as a personal test:

Just seeing, you get to see lots of different things. ... And you get to see lots of different kids and you get to see them in different environments and it’s sort of like, for me, it’s sort of like a test. Sort of a challenge. ... I like the challenge. I like the variety.

Ernie appears to contradict himself somewhat as he describes his perception of the positives of T.O.C. work. On one hand, he values the opportunity to return to a school as a T.O.C. so that he is recognized by the students:

The best reward is when you come, when you have done a class before and you come back and the students are happy to see you. They know your name, they just know you. It’s a warm feeling. ... That’s the best feeling by far.

However, he also states that he appreciates the situation he faces as a T.O.C. where he can leave a school immediately when classes end and put the day behind him:

... you get to go home and not stay too late. Everyone knows that one of the good things about being a T.O.C. is that you get to leave right away and not take anything home. If you have a bad student or a bad day, chances are you’re not going to be there the next day. So, that’s good.
In addition, Ernie outlines that he welcomes the opportunity to meet a regular teacher who may be willing to offer feedback or advice to him. He appears to value the opportunity for professional dialogue with a regular teacher:

It’s always rewarding when you meet a teacher at school and they are nice to you and fill you in on stuff and they tell you what to do in a certain situation. They just mentor you sort of for that day or for a few minutes here and there. That’s always nice.

Janet uses the opportunity of visiting different classes to build up a personal file of various classroom resources and strategies. She describes her use of the regular teacher’s resources as:

Well, stealing. Taking worksheets and handouts. I love that, it’s my favourite thing to do.

Kerri offers an interesting perspective on her perception of a positive aspect of T.O.C. teaching. She is trained as a secondary teacher but has often been T.O.C. teaching in a district at the elementary level. She has found this to have been a welcome opportunity:

I love doing elementary because I never would have been able to do elementary. I love doing that.

Lynn expresses an introspective outlook on her perception of a positive aspect of T.O.C. teaching. It appears that Lynn is looking past the more obvious aspects of T.O.C. teaching mentioned by the other participants and recognizes that the T.O.C. experience may have changed her as a person:

Well, a positive for me, it’s helped me look at things in a different light and just to understand that not everything is going to go as planned, just to learn to be a more flexible person. Just to, not to take things so seriously because as a T.O.C., you can’t.
Participants’ rating of the T.O.C. experience

The participants were asked to express their perception of the value of their T.O.C. experience on an informal scale ranging from one to ten, with ten being the optimal value. Despite the variety of frustrations expressed by the participants throughout the study, most participants rated their T.O.C. experience as generally positive. Kerri looked at her experience from a number of perspectives:

It’s a seven if you include the stress, not getting to know the kids, and classroom management. But it’s a nine or ten for different experiences, meeting new kids, new classrooms, getting to do Punjabi one day and Kindergarten the next. I love that.

Janet feels that the experience is good for her at this stage of her career. She explains her rating as:

There is no extreme, definitely not miserable. I can’t call it Utopia but it’s not just average. So, above a five. Probably a seven or an eight. ... It does suck sometimes but, you know, it’s generally pretty good. It’s a really good thing for me right now. I like it.

Ernie seems to be hesitant in rating his perception of the T.O.C. experience. He recognizes some of the negatives he associates with T.O.C. teaching but still seems somewhat unsure:

... it’s not that bad ... it’s probably a seven and a half. It’s o.k., it’s nothing to write home about, it’s not a thing you’d want to do forever. I know that there are some people who just T.O.C. Whatever, that’s their career. The good thing is that at the end of the day, that’s it, you get to go. But, you know, the negatives, there are some negatives, but it’s about a seven and a half out of ten.

Lynn is more definite on her rating of the T.O.C. experience. She has elected to look at many aspects of T.O.C. teaching together as she states her interpretation of the T.O.C. experience:
Five would be a pretty safe guess because considering everything, the classroom, the staffroom, the union, the benefits, when you throw all that in, it’s an average experience. I wouldn’t wish it on anyone ....

Generally, the participants were somewhat positive when asked to provide a personal value to their T.O.C. experience. In recognizing that they were beginning their teaching careers as T.O.C.s, the majority of the participants indicate that T.O.C. teaching is a valuable experience for them as beginning teachers. When asked if T.O.C. teaching has been valuable for her, Lynn offers:

Very much. I mean, regardless of the no benefits, the instability, unpredictability, putting all that aside, I’d still say I’m glad I did it. I think I’m a better person for it. It definitely has shaped my outlook and generally, how I feel as a teacher.

Janet feels that the exposure she has had to a variety of educational settings has been a great value to her as a beginning teacher and has contributed to the T.O.C. experience being positive for her. She suggests that all teachers should T.O.C. teach:

Definitely positive. I’ve learned a lot. ... A lot about what I would like to see my classroom as, and about schools that I like and things I like about certain schools. So, it’s been really good I think. I think all teachers should do it because when, if I had just started my own classroom right away, I probably would not have been as effective now that I have had a T.O.C. experience. ... It’s been a very good stepping stone [to a regular position].

Kerri also stresses that she has appreciated teaching in a variety of situations. Her comments may indicate that Kerri has developed professionally as a T.O.C. and now feels ready for a regular teaching position:

I definitely think most teachers should do it. Yes, it’s nice to get a job right away but there’s nothing like seeing how other classrooms work and knowing that maybe my niche is elementary. ... I like T.O.C.ing. I complain but I quite like it. ... T.O.C.ing is such an individual job. It’s easy to fall into the trap of not having any responsibility in the job and having a lot of independence. But I am now ready for more responsibility.
Ernie does not share the views of the three other participants as they relate to the
value of the T.O.C. experience. From the outset, he stressed that he was teaching as a
T.O.C. with the objective of securing a regular teaching position. He appears to be
somewhat resentful of his T.O.C. experience:

I don’t think I learned too much as a T.O.C. that helped me for being a regular
teacher. No, if anything it probably made me more thicker skinned because you
take some grief. ... In a way, some days it [T.O.C.ing] turns you off of teaching.
You’re not, with the term teacher on call, I don’t know if teacher should even be
in there. You’re on call but what are you really? You’re not really teaching
anything too much.

Ernie would rather have had the opportunity to begin his teaching career with a regular
teaching position. He appears to summarize his view of T.O.C. teaching with his
concluding comment:

No, I rather would have had a [regular] job right away. ... It would be nice to
start fresh with your own students. It would be nice. No one remembers a T.O.C.

Summary of chapter

This chapter has explored the practical context of T.O.C. teaching and has
identified and investigated six common themes of the T.O.C. experience from the
perspectives of four beginning secondary teachers who are teachers on call. The
participants experienced T.O.C. teaching in unique ways. However, from the four
T.O.C.s, thematic analysis identified six common themes associated with T.O.C:
teaching. The lack of T.O.C. familiarity with the teaching environment, the lack of
T.O.C. authority in the classroom, the lack of credibility of the T.O.C. as a teacher,
challenges with classroom management, indifferent treatment of the T.O.C. as a
professional, and the lack of exposure to T.O.C. teaching in teacher education [pre-
service] programs were identified as common themes from the experiences of the four participants.

In addition to the identification and investigation of six common themes, the practical context of the T.O.C. experience was explored. The participants provided insight into their perceptions of how a T.O.C. was defined, what the start of a T.O.C.'s teaching day might resemble, what measures may be implemented at various levels to enhance the T.O.C. experience, what the positive aspects of T.O.C. teaching may be, and how valuable they perceived T.O.C. teaching to be in their early teaching careers. The insights provided in these areas do not constitute a common theme but they help construct an understanding of the impact T.O.C. teaching may have on a beginning teacher.

In the final chapter, the major findings related to the research focus will be discussed and linked to the literature review. Conclusions, including measures for pre-service and in-service implementation, will also be presented.
CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to gain insight into the experiences and perceptions of the T.O.C. experience from the perspectives of beginning teachers who are T.O.C.s. Data analysis utilizing the constant comparative method and thematic analysis lead to the determination of six themes common to all participants. In addition, practical aspects of T.O.C. teaching and other areas of importance were described in Chapter Four. The limitations of the study, discussion, conclusions, and implications for practice that appear in this chapter are drawn from the analysis of data of the four T.O.C.s who participated in the study. The study was guided by the research focus:

Given the nature of T.O.C. employment and how the demands of T.O.C. teaching may differ from the demands of regular teaching, the study will explore perceptions of the nature of T.O.C. teaching held by beginning secondary teachers who are employed as T.O.C.s.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations of the study that may affect its application to other contexts. The sample size of four participants is relatively small and the interview schedule of four months represents only a portion of the school year. Also, each participant was a beginning teacher in either the first or second year of T.O.C. teaching. The study does not include the perceptions of teachers who have been employed as T.O.C.s for longer periods of time, or the views of T.O.C.s who may have previously been regular teachers.

The study was conducted in the large metropolitan area of B.C.'s Lower Mainland. There are two universities in the region with education faculties.
Consequently, there is a relatively large supply of beginning teachers who remain in the Lower Mainland and are employed as T.O.C.s. Distance between school districts in the Lower Mainland allows T.O.C.s to work in several districts. This situation may be quite different from that which may exist in school districts that are smaller in size, are a greater distance from a teacher education institution, that do not have a large supply of beginning teachers to work as T.O.C.s, and where travel for the T.O.C. from one district to another may not be possible.

**Findings related to Common Themes and linked to the Literature Review**

For each of the four T.O.C.s who participated in the study, T.O.C. teaching was the entry point into the teaching profession and the means by which they have started their teaching careers. They express that the role played by a regular teacher in a student’s school experience is holistic and may impact a student’s live in a significant fashion. However, in defining a T.O.C., the participants stated that they perceived the role to be merely supervisory, even to the point of referring to T.O.C. teaching as babysitting. The participants’ definitions of a T.O.C. revolved around the management of student behaviour in the classroom. The discrepancy between the perceived role of the regular teacher and the perceived role of the T.O.C., in light of the data analysis of the T.O.C.’s perceptions, is largely due to the common theme of lack of T.O.C. familiarity with the teaching environment. Other common themes and experiences related to the participants’ T.O.C. experiences are related closely to the common theme of lack of familiarity.

The T.O.C.s who participated in the study teach as T.O.C.s in at least two school districts each, in a variety of school settings, and in numerous classrooms. The common
theme of lack of T.O.C. familiarity with the teaching environment is reflected in the confusion that is generally associated with the beginning of a T.O.C.'s day as they orient themselves to their school and classroom assignment for that day. The participants outline that much of their focus before classes begin is determining the plan for the day as indicated by the regular teacher. This is a stressful experience as directions from the regular teacher may be unclear and materials required by the T.O.C. for the day's classes may be difficult to locate.

Radiating from the common theme of lack of T.O.C. familiarity with the teaching environment are the common themes of lack of T.O.C. authority, lack of T.O.C. credibility as a teacher, and challenges with classroom management. As T.O.C.s are not members of the regular teaching staff in a school, the participants indicate that it is extremely difficult to be perceived as a credible, authoritative member of the teaching profession. This is illustrated further by the participants' perceptions that when they have the opportunity to T.O.C. regularly in a specific school or T.O.C. for an extended period at one school, they feel more comfortable in the setting. The T.O.C.s indicate that as students and regular staff associate the T.O.C. more with the school, the T.O.C. has more authority, is viewed in a more credible manner, and classroom management difficulties diminish.

The impact of the common theme of the lack of T.O.C. familiarity with the teaching environment on the T.O.C. experience is consistent with the findings of Clifton and Rambaran (1987) as they define T.O.C. teaching as being a "marginal situation" (p. 311). Clifton and Rambaran (1987) specifically identify that T.O.C.s do not have the authority of regular teachers and that they lack knowledge of the rituals of the classrooms
in which they work. The participants support Clifton and Rambaran’s (1987) assertions through their perceptions of their T.O.C. experiences.

Friedman (1983) identifies major task demand/adaptation areas of T.O.C. teaching that he defines as order-maintenance and assignment execution. Order-maintenance refers to activities related to the functioning of the class. Discipline is the main order-maintenance activity for T.O.C.s as outlined by Friedman (1983). Assignment execution refers to providing for the continuity of the regular teacher’s lesson plans. Maintaining order in the classroom was a major concern for the T.O.C.s in the study as they attempted to balance classroom management challenges with maintaining a positive learning environment in the classroom. The participants indicate that most of their focus in a classroom as a T.O.C. is on managing student behaviour. The experiences described by the T.O.C.s and the emergence of common themes associated with T.O.C. familiarity, authority, credibility, and classroom management are consistent with Friedman’s (1983) conclusions.

The participants expressed that they measured their success as T.O.C.s in terms of student behaviour. They indicated that a day was successful if the students behaved well and there were few problems associated with classroom management. The importance of maintaining order in the classroom reflects the findings of Bontempo and Deay (1986). Bontempo and Deay (1986) found that from several areas that were concerns for T.O.C.s, student discipline and classroom procedures were the two main concerns. The T.O.C. participants have clearly indicated that not knowing classroom procedures is a source of stress, as are the constant challenges of maintaining order in the classroom. The perceptions of the T.O.C.s reflect the findings of Bontempo and Deay (1986).
The common theme of the lack of T.O.C. familiarity with the teaching environment permeates the T.O.C. experiences of the participants as explored in the common themes of lack of T.O.C. authority, lack of T.O.C. credibility, and challenges with classroom management. The role played in T.O.C. teaching by this lack of familiarity is also evident in the literature associated with T.O.C. teaching.

McHugh (1998) concurs with the common theme of T.O.C. treatment by regular staff as expressed by the participants. McHugh (1998) found that regular teachers did not regard T.O.C.s as professional colleagues. The T.O.C.s in the study provided personal insight into feeling unwelcome by the staff in many schools.

Pre-service teacher education programs provided very little exposure to T.O.C. teaching for the participants and there was a common perception that there was little preparation for the realities of T.O.C. teaching. In some cases, the participants seemed to resent their pre-service programs. In the literature, Augustin (1987), Bontempo and Deay (1986), Ostapczuk (1994), Parsons and Dillon (1978), and Soares (1988) call for measures to address T.O.C. teaching in pre-service teacher education. Only one of the four participants had the opportunity to experience aspects of T.O.C. teaching directly through a practicum activity associated with her pre-service program. As identified by the literature and supported by the participants, pre-service teacher education programs need to address the phenomenon of T.O.C. teaching.

**Findings related to important issues expressed by the participants and linked to the Literature Review**

There are a number of articles that reflect the T.O.C.'s perception that districts and schools need to improve in-service programs for T.O.C.s. While the Richmond School
District may provide a useful orientation in the opinion of some of the participants, it was generally felt that districts and schools could do more to improve the nature of T.O.C. teaching. Augustin (1987), Brace (1990), McHugh (1998), Wilson (1999) and several others support the views of the T.O.C.s as they call for improved communication between T.O.C.s and regular teachers, in-service training for T.O.C.s, district provisions for meaningful T.O.C. evaluation and feedback, and provisions for a regular teacher contact when T.O.C.s are in schools. Many of these initiatives would address areas identified by the participants as important areas of T.O.C. teaching.

Conclusions

The T.O.C. participants of this study have outlined challenges they face as beginning teachers who are employed as T.O.C.s. There are negative aspects associated with T.O.C. teaching and there are also rewarding, positive aspects identified by the T.O.C.s. Despite Ernie’s view, the other participants feel that the challenges of the role aside, the T.O.C. experience has been a stepping stone in their teaching careers. As the findings from this study are related to the literature associated with T.O.C. teaching, the question that now emerges is: What measures could be enacted to contribute to T.O.C. teaching becoming a productive early career experience for beginning teachers? I conclude that strategies must be in place in pre-service teacher education programs and that in-service measures are required for recent graduates teaching as T.O.C.s.

Pre-service strategies

In 1997, the B.C. College of Teachers surveyed recent graduates of B.C. teacher education programs and 71.5% of respondents reported that their first paid employment
as a teacher in B.C. was as a T.O.C. Based on these figure, the B.C. College of Teachers report (1997) summarized:

Teaching on call is confirmed as the dominant mode of entry to the profession. Over seventy percent of all respondents enter teaching as teachers on call. This route of entry has significantly reduced the match between the subject and grade level of preparation with the current employment of teachers. Teacher education programs must recognize these changes and assist new teachers in meeting the new employment realities. Preparing students for working at different grade levels and in more that one subject area needs to be considered. In addition, school boards and local unions must develop ways to support beginning teachers whose initial employment is as a teacher on call. (p. 20)

Teacher education programs must ultimately focus on preparing pre-service teachers to eventually work as regular teachers. Consequently, any measures employed to prepare pre-service teachers will need to complement existing teacher education programs. I will use the University of B.C. Teacher Education Program 12-Month Secondary Teacher Education Option (U.B.C. Teacher Education Office, 1998) as a framework for the following proposals to help prepare pre-service teachers for T.O.C. employment.

1. Pre-service teachers need to increase their awareness and understanding of the nature of T.O.C. teaching and the skills required for T.O.C. teaching. As indicated by Parsons and Dillon (1978), pre-service teachers may have negative views of T.O.C.s that have lingered from their own days as high school students. Incorporating articles such as those by Clifton and Rambaran (1987), Dendwick (1993), Drury (1988), Friedman (1983), McHugh (1998), and Nidds and McGerald (1994) into course readings may help provide a general introduction to T.O.C. teaching.

2. In order to further develop an understanding of the role of the T.O.C. in schools, round table discussions including pre-service teachers, regular teachers, T.O.C.s,
school administrators, and district administrators involved in the hiring and orientation of T.O.C.s should be held at some point during the pre-service 12 month program. The objective of such discussions could include clarifying the district's and schools' philosophy of T.O.C.s in the classroom [ie. behaviour management and instructional continuity] as indicated by Rawson (1981), exploring the goals of the regular teacher when a T.O.C. replaces him/her in the classroom, and hearing the perceptions of a teacher presently employed as a T.O.C.

3. T.O.C.s must be prepared to teach in other subject areas and in a variety of grade levels. Addressing this situation, as indicated by various authors and the B.C. College of Teachers (1997), may be difficult within the confines of the present pre-service program. Perhaps the most effective means to address this may be by encouraging regular teachers to leave more adequate lesson plans for the T.O.C. This is not always possible or practical. Pre-service teachers should be given the opportunity to develop generic lesson plans with colleagues in the program that may help them cope with unfamiliar subject areas. It is not realistic to expect a T.O.C. to have a basic knowledge of every subject area. It is useful to recognize that T.O.C. teaching does allow a new teacher to experience a variety of diverse subject areas and that exposure to various subject areas may be a positive experience. There is no need for the T.O.C. to attempt to impress upon students that he/she is knowledgeable if that is not the case. The students themselves are valuable resources for the T.O.C. when exposed to new subject areas.

4. During the student teacher practicum period, student teachers should have to prepare to work as a T.O.C. in each other's classes, as outlined by Parsons and Dillon (1978).
This process will require co-operation from the school personnel and co-ordination from faculty advisors but it appears to be a worthwhile exercise.

The purpose of teacher education programs is to prepare graduates to be effective regular classroom teachers. Teaching as a T.O.C. should not be the primary focus of a teacher education program, even if the majority of new teachers will work as T.O.C.s before becoming full time teachers. The objective for the teacher education program in regards to T.O.C. teaching should be to give pre-service teachers an understanding of the realities of T.O.C. teaching and provide them with opportunities to develop confidence in beginning their careers as T.O.C.s

In-service strategies for recent graduates teaching as T.O.C.s

Some school districts only do a disservice to new teachers who are employed as T.O.C.s by merely relying on the dreaded 6 a.m. telephone call to serve as the beginning of the T.O.C. adventure. By investing time and resources into T.O.C. development, the school district will ultimately reap the rewards.

1. In addition to orientations for new T.O.C.s in a school district before the beginning of the school year, school districts must continue to hold orientations or follow-up programs for new T.O.C. teachers throughout the year as T.O.C.s are hired at various times. If T.O.C. orientations are not in place in a district, they must be established immediately given the seriousness of some of the issues raised by T.O.C.s in this study. The objectives of T.O.C. orientation sessions include making T.O.C.s feel that they are a part of the district from the outset of employment, providing district and school policy handbooks before T.O.C.s enter an unfamiliar school, outlining opportunities for involvement in the local teacher association, and clarifying
procedural aspects of employment as a T.O.C. in the district [i.e. pay periods, dispatch procedures etc.].

2. In addition to orientation sessions, school districts need to develop a clear policy for T.O.C. professional development. District-wide professional development days should include the district’s T.O.C.s in some fashion. Also, there should be provisions for T.O.C. specific professional development opportunities. This will require creativity from the school district as cost will be a factor. Costs can be minimized by holding sessions outside of school time.

3. School districts should examine the feasibility of placing T.O.C.s in as few schools as possible during the school year. I feel strongly that this practice will make an immediate impact on improving the effectiveness of T.O.C.s in classrooms in a school district. Rather than moving T.O.C.s around the district, it should be possible to focus T.O.C.s on fewer schools. This will allow T.O.C.s to feel comfortable in the schools as they are familiar with the school’s policies and procedures, they may feel more a part of the school staff, and they will get to know the students in the school. This practice will increase the familiarity of the T.O.C. with the school, the students, and the staff and will reduce many of the negative aspects associated with T.O.C. teaching. The district should make the placement of regular T.O.C.s in each school as an objective of its T.O.C. program. Such a measure is supported in the literature by Nidds and McGerald (1994), St. Michel (1995), and Stevens (1969) and it would address a number of the challenges faced by the participants in the study.

4. School districts or local teacher associations can strive to establish a program that would see new teachers employed as T.O.C.s placed in mentoring partnerships with
regular teachers in the district. This initiative may require incentives to attract regular teachers to participate but it would be beneficial for the new T.O.C. to have meeting/reflection times with an experienced teacher during the school year.

5. School district administrators such as district principals and superintendents are not often able to visit the schools and students in their district. It may be advantageous for the district administrators, students, and new T.O.C.s to have district administrators work with new T.O.C.s in classrooms. For the first few months of the school year, school district administrators should strive to work with one T.O.C. for at least a half day each. This study focuses on secondary T.O.C.s but this measure could also apply to elementary T.O.C.s. This would force the district administrators to get into the schools at a grassroots level, would allow the new T.O.C. to team teach with and get to know a district administrator, and would provide insight for the administrator into T.O.C. teaching.

6. An administrator at each school in a district should be identified as the contact for T.O.C.s in that school. This should be a formal aspect of the administrative responsibilities associated with supporting teachers, regular as well as T.O.C.s., in providing a positive learning environment in the school. This does not necessarily mean that the T.O.C.s use the administrator as a means to deal with discipline or classroom management issues, but that the administrator introduces himself/herself to T.O.C.s at the start of the day and provide a familiar face in the school for the T.O.C.

7. New teachers working as T.O.C.s must be proactive regarding the professional standing of T.O.C.s in the school district. This would require working with the local teachers association and other T.O.C.s to promote the professional standing within the
school district and pursue some of the initiatives outlined above. Although T.O.C. teaching may be a relatively short term situation for beginning teachers, they must take some responsibility for contributing to the development of T.O.C. teaching.

Teaching as a teacher on call will never be an easy occupation and may never receive the attention it deserves. In B.C., school districts are under constant financial pressure and funds for the professional development of T.O.C.s within districts will continue to be very limited. It is important to remember that despite the difficulties associated with T.O.C. teaching, there are positive aspects to T.O.C. teaching. If employment patterns in B.C. continue to stress T.O.C. teaching as an entry point into the teaching profession, it is of profound importance that stakeholders in education continue to investigate and review the T.O.C. phenomenon.

By the way, Ms. Barr had no further difficulties with Too-Tall and The Gang.
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Appendix A

Letter of Approval from Richmond School District (#38)
Appendix B

Questions for Interview #3:

1) What are some of the frustrations/negative aspects you experience as a T.O.C.?

2) What are some of the rewards/positive aspects you experience as a T.O.C.?

3) Describe the grades/subject areas you have taught as a T.O.C.

4) What situations do you feel least prepared to deal with while T.O.C. teaching?

5) Have you faced any discipline problems while working as a T.O.C.? Examples?

6) How have you handled discipline problems? When do you call for help? Is calling for help perceived as a weakness – by you/ by others?

7) How do you feel the teaching staff perceives you as a T.O.C.? Administrator’s view? District’s view? Students’ view?

8) Do you feel you are treated as a professional in your TOC work?

9) What can contract (regular) teachers do to help you be more successful in your role as a T.O.C.?

10) Is your TOC work more behavior focused or teaching focused?

11) Can you think of anything you would like to add?
Appendix C

Interview #3 with Janet Dec. 14/99

R: Let’s go back to last time. How do you define teacher?
S: How do you define teacher? Do you mean what is the role of a teacher or a literal definition of it?
R: Why don’t you try both?
S: Well, I see teacher just defined as someone who imports a skill, or guides you, but that’s not necessarily what teachers do most of the time. That’s what I think.
R: OK, then what do teachers do?
S: Well they’re supposed help facilitate students. You know, there is this curriculum they’re supposed to teach and essentially, they are supposed to help guide these students through this curriculum but at the same time they’re supposed help them develop their social skills and help them develop their personality. It’s sort of, also explore avenues they might be interested in, sort of develop the student into, I don’t know, anything. Spark their curiosity and get them to think creatively. It’s not just, you know, this is miosis. It’s hard to do that especially in provincial exams. I don’t think I would like to teach a Grade 12 course. I don’t think I could do it. The pressure of the exam and the students. It’s just like everyone in Grade 12, it’s hard not to teach to the test and students don’t like that but everything is so based on an exam, that’s why it’s so difficult to teach because it’s not necessarily about the students, it’s about their exam and their marks. You find that in a lot of kids. All they care about are their marks. But how do you, I would like to make not as much emphasis on grades and exam marks but you can’t do that. That’s what it’s all based on, sort of like an oxymoron, you can’t have one without the other. And you’re supposed to try to help them grow as individuals and it’s not very easy to do that if you’ve got all these restrictions. I don’t even know if I’ve even answered your question. I went off on a tangent.
R: By going off on a tangent, you’ve illustrated your views. Looking back on your work as a T.O.C., what are some of the frustrations/negative aspects of T.O.C. teaching?
S: I’ve already talked about one of them. Not knowing the students’ names and faces. That’s the biggest thing I think. It’s like when you’re trying to get everyone’s attention when you know the kids, you can call on them. If you have a seating plan, they will try to switch on you, they’ll say “Oh so and so let’s us do this”. They’ll try to play with you and you don’t always know, you don’t know what the rules are in a school and within a classroom and that doesn’t help. I think that is probably one of the biggest problems. They (students) will try to manipulate you because you don’t know. The students are very smart but they don’t realize that we’re just as smart, if not smarter. You know all the tricks, the washroom thing, that drives me crazy. You know I think of one teacher at Seaquam who solves that by saying if you want to leave the classroom to go get something from your locker or go to the washroom, you’re going to be timed and you’ll spend that time at lunch time or after school. She says students will not go because they will not inconvenience themselves for a minute after school. And it’s almost like if you say they can go, they will take advantage of it and they will. You know leaving for a half an hour, just lying to you, saying they have to go to the counsellor, pretending to be sick and all this nonsense. That’s the biggest thing, you never know when they’re telling
you the truth or not. Because they will do things with you that they will not normally do with their normal teacher. Because they know and they know what they can get away with and it’s a lot more than with their regular teacher. That’s the biggest thing.

R: That’s the biggest. Any others?

S: It’s just not knowing where you’re going to be going. It’s nice to get something like a week. You know what you’re going to be doing the entire week and you know you have to get up early and go there early in the morning, that kind of thing. And sometimes when the teachers are doing a workshop that day and I’ll arrive like half an hour to forty minutes early so I can look over everything, and nothing is there for me because the teacher hasn’t got there yet. And it’s like, I got up a half an hour early for nothing. That’s annoying. I think the biggest thing is not knowing the students and not knowing the rules and taking advantage of you (by students) or trying to take advantage of you, trying to make you look dumb.

R: How about positive things or rewards from T.O.C. teaching?

S: Well, stealing. Taking worksheets and handouts. I love that, it’s my favourite thing to do. Just seeing, you get to see lots of different things. It’s like, you know, if you don’t want to work, you don’t have to. I like to be able to do that. I like to be able to say “I don’t want to work today” so I turn my ringer off. And you get to see lots of different kids and you get to see them in different environments and it’s sort of like, for me, it’s sort of like a test. Sort of a challenge. I know this class is going to challenge me today so how am I going to handle it? It’s interesting to see, I like the challenge. I like the variety.

R: You like the variety but you don’t like the uncertainty?

S: Yeah,...

R: I asked you when we started but maybe it’s changed. What subject areas and grades have you been dealing with recently?

S: Um, as it stands now for Delta, I said I would teach a whole bunch of things but I don’t. I only say yes to science. It’s usually science 8 to 10 with some math, usually 8 to 10. That’s all I say yes to just because once I got about 8 calls in one night just because I kept turning them down and they were like law, data processing and I thought I don’t want to do that.

R: How about Richmond?

S: Richmond, in Richmond I get a lot of science and math. That’s because that’s all I said I would teach. I wrote that on my application and I never got a chance to change it because I would teach other things but it has just worked out well for me. I get enough work with just that stuff so I don’t even bother.

R: It’s all been secondary, you haven’t had any elementary?

S: One elementary I went to in Delta. It was a librarian. It was neat. The kids are so sweet. They’re so sweet. It almost makes you want to switch but no. They’re really cute, they’re so well behaved. It’s so nice to see that because that’s the stuff you don’t see at secondary. It’s like the kids, they do their thing, they listen to you. It’s so nice. And you know when they’re done I remember when they go out of the library, they pick up their little books, they line up single file, it’s so cute.

R: Is this reality?

S: I thought, Boy, You’re going to be different in about five years. They’re neat.

R: When you are T.O.C. teaching, what situations do you feel least prepared for?
S: Um, emergencies, like even something like a fire drill. Because most of the time, unless you go and look yourself, most teachers do not give you the procedure for a fire drill. This is where you want to exit. Sometimes you see it on the classroom walls which is really nice and it’s helpful. But it’s not always there and it’s like, for example you don’t always know the medical history of the students. Like there’s someone with epilepsy and they fall down into a seizure, what do you do? Just like emergencies. It’s like sometimes in a science one, not everything is where it’s supposed to be. Where to put the broken glass. Glass is always breaking in the juniors and usually you’re supposed to have a dust pan and glass container, sometimes they don’t. You’ve got to run around and try to find one. You don’t think of this ahead of time then you’re looking at it when it actually happens. I think just emergencies.

R: Have you had any discipline problems while you have been working as a T.O.C.?

S: (She laughs) Any discipline problems? Yeah, sure, everybody has discipline problems.

R: What have you faced?

S: I told you that one at Burnett where the kid just refused to write the test and he just left and never went to the office. The biggest thing actually that I’ve had is this one kid, you probably know him so I’m not going to say his name, he, I had him in a science class. He asked “Can I go to the washroom?” and he leaves for about a half an hour and doesn’t come back. When he came back, I asked him “It took you a half an hour to go the washroom and it’s across the hall?” Oh, blah blah blah, they always have a million excuses prepared. And then it’s like not doing any work, when students don’t do any work. They do nothing but yammer and when you try to get them to do something, they don’t listen. They don’t do anything. That’s probably the most frustrating thing. Only once I really had it. And they just wouldn’t do anything. There’s like, they would just kind of leave the classroom without even telling me. It was “Whoa, what’s going on here? What does your regular teacher do? I mean, is this acceptable?” The reply is usually, I just went to the washroom, it’s just right there. I don’t care, you have to tell me where you go because I need to keep track of where you are. And, that was really frustrating just trying to get them to tell me when they’re leaving the classroom. That was annoying. And, it’s like today, they did the old switch seat thing and I totally got burned when I found out. It’s funny, the whole class is listening. Everybody’s always listening to see what you are going to do, always testing. But actually this group is not too bad. Let’s see what else...no-one has actually sworn at me in class, or called me a bitch or anything like that. Nothing that extreme. Um, other than that, a few isolated incidents, nothing that major.

R: So, how could you or would you handle those discipline problems?

S: Well see, that’s another thing. It’s like, if you’re there for just one day, you’re so limited in what you can do, which is practically nothing. All you can do is leave a note saying so and so left the class for 20 minutes or said he was, ... Like another thing, the same kid I was telling you about who left for a half an hour when I was at Burnett, he said, he comes to me “Yeah, I’m going to Arizona so I have to leave a half an hour early” I said “Where’s your note?” “I’m going to go to the office, sign out, they’re going to call my parents and all this stuff” It’s like OK, now what am I supposed to do? Do I sit here and argue with him? ‘Cause he’s the type to argue with me “What, don’t you believe me? I’m not lying.” He knows me, he’s had me many times. And, it’s like OK. And of
course, I go down after school and sign out? No, he didn’t. And, I left a note saying so and so said he’s going to Arizona for six days and you know, as he (the student) is leaving, one of his friends says, “See you Monday in science.” So, he’s either lying to me or being just a total little bastard. I don’t know, one or the other. He’s both. There’s nothing I can do. I mean, do I sit here and say, waste fifteen minutes of my time, say “OK what’s your dad’s name?” Then go down to the office, give him a phone call. That’s probably what I was supposed to do. Give him a phone call, say so and so is saying you’re going to Arizona, now is this true? Am I supposed to let him out a half and hour early? And if he says no, I don’t know what you’re talking about, then go back upstairs and say no, so and so, you were lying to me blah blah blah. And waste half an hour while I’ve got another class of thirty. What am I supposed to do? Say OK, fine. It’s like already because I’ve been there, I’ve told him he’s given up his bathroom privileges when I’m here. “Can I just go to my locker to get a pen?” No, here you go. “I need a textbook.” Here you go. “I need to go to the washroom.” No. Oh god, so it’s interesting when you have the same kid when you’re back there all the time (same school) so you kind of get to know them a little bit, but still it’s like “I talked to the teacher about that and she knows” And that’s another thing really. You never know when they’re telling the truth. So, if he’s lying, he’ll get it from his teacher on Monday, that’s all I’m hoping for.

R: Have you had to call for help at all?
S: No.
R: You haven’t had to call a VP or anyone else to come give you a hand?
S: Not yet, but I try to think about when I would do that. You know, see I always have this thing when a kid swears at me or something that’s totally unacceptable, do I send them out into the hall or do I send them to the office. And, if I send them to the office, are they even going to go? See, that’s another thing. You send them somewhere, are they really going to go? I don’t think they will. But, it would be kind of dumb not to because I would definitely go check. And, then they get called down to the office or they get nabbed the next day. So, I don’t know.
R: Do you think shouting out, I shouldn’t say shouting out for help but asking for assistance, do you think that’s perceived as a weakness of the T.O.C.?
S: Well, I think it depends on why you call them, because if it’s “He’s (a student) is talking and isn’t listening, he’s off task” then, come on. I think generally, if, I think you view it as if a T.O.C. has to go to a VP, it must be serious. That’s the way I think because that’s the way I would use it. Now, there’s no other reason. If you can’t control the classroom, there’s a problem. It’s not the VP’s job. So, not necessarily.
R: Let’s try this. Do you feel you’re treated professionally as a T.O.C.?
S: Yeh, I think so.
R: How come?
S: That’s a good question. How come?
R: If you think you are, what gives you that feeling?
S: I’m just, because I don’t feel that I’ve been treated unprofessionally. So, I don’t know, um, well how does someone get treated professionally? I did say yes but…I’m treated as another teacher.
R: How do you feel the teaching staff at a school you go to perceives you?
S: Like some outsider I think. It’s because most of the time, they won’t talk to you or won’t... if you go into the staffroom, everybody knows who is not part of the staff. And generally, no one says anything to you but I find within the department that you are in for, if there are teachers around that are in that department, they’re usually quite nice. It’s just sort of everyone else in the school, you’re just a fly on the wall. You’re not even there, you don’t exist. So, I don’t know if that’s considered professional.

R: We’ll get back to that another time. How about the students? How do you think they perceive you?

S: They’re always absolutely thrilled. If someone who they can get away with anything is there. Yea, we get to slack off today, we’ve got a sub. They’re always happy.

R: What about the admin at a school? How do you think they perceive a T.O.C.?

S: Um, they probably hope the T.O.C. knows what they’re doing. They’re actually very nice because when I went to, just recently I have forgotten what school it was, it was actually rather annoying. I went there early. I stood there. There was a lady in the photocopy, two people in the photocopy room but there was no secretary. It was kind of weird so I was just standing there, standing there and the VP came out and he came up to me. I said I was in for so and so. He said Hi and shook my hand. He was very nice and said your teacher is in the photocopy room. So, he was actually very nice, but I don’t know honestly how they perceive us. I don’t see them very often and if you do, it’s just Hi.

R: What about the districts you work for, how do you think they perceive T.O.C.s?

S: How do they view T.O.C.s? A necessity because when there is no T.O.C., that means other teachers have to fill in.

R: Kind of a no-brainer question huh? You’re allowed to say that. Do you find it different going to a school that you’re familiar with?

S: Oh yeah. I go to Burnett and anytime I’m there, it’s always on the second floor and kids know my name. I’m walking down the hallway and they are saying hello to me. And kids that I’ve subbed for earlier on in the year will say hi to me because they still remember me. It’s totally different when they know you and you don’t even have to introduce yourself as opposed to going somewhere... And they know what you’re like and they already know what they should do and what they can’t do and all that stuff. It’s totally different. Because everytime you go somewhere, you’re starting from scratch. That’s one of the negative things as well with T.O.C.ing because they don’t know you...

R: Using your term, what can a contract teacher do to make your day easier?

S: Tell me what the rules of the classroom are. Tell what the rules are, give me a seating plan. If you don’t have one, let me know there is no seating plan. Um, and make sure it’s updated or then you get, “Oh, she moved me but she didn’t change it on the seating plan” OK, what do you say? Um, tell me just like the little rules, what they are allowed to do, what they’re not allowed to do, what the procedures are. Like attendance, sometimes the secretaries don’t tell you. When are you supposed to send the attendance, how do you do that? Where do you want me to record it and I know it’s hard to remember things but “Oh she was supposed to do this” or “I was supposed to get something from her today” Most of the time teachers don’t remember that when they’re sick. That’s a problem too because they have so much going on that they can’t remember it themselves. Just let me know what the deal is and if you’re doing a lab, let me know where the materials are and just rules I think would be really helpful.
R: When you're working at a school, do you feel your work is more behavior based or teaching based?
S: Behavior. Totally, oh yeah. It's all behaviour because just trying to get them to do work is probably the biggest thing. 'Cause they don't do it. They feel like they don't have to when the subs there. And I'll tell you a situation that really kind of bothered me once. I went to a school. They told me it was a full day in Richmond, and it was one of those Leadership 11 and work placement kind of courses and Enriched Science nine and ten class. Um, I go there in the morning and the teacher's there because he's in a meeting. I go to the classroom and he says, "You know, I didn't realize this but you're actually not teaching the first block. You're not teaching all morning. You don't teach until after lunch." It's because all these students are involved in some luncheon or something like that. It's like OK, but he says and he's got this all typewritten "To help me catch up, do you think you could do this marking for me?" And I had to make up the keys for some of these things and so, I'm doing this marking and he's got this stack about this high (big stack) and none of these marks have been recorded. "Can you record all these marks on this sheet?" And then "Do all this photocopying for me?" And I'm like, yeah, OK. "Are you sure you don't mind" he says. What do you want me to say? Yeah, I do mind and I think you're a jerk. You mean I could have slept in this morning and done a half day which I would have been more than happy to do? And instead I'm here..."Well at least you get a full day." Yeah, OK. It's mighty expensive on your part to get a T.O.C. to help you catch up on your marking. Yeah, whatever. That really annoyed me.
R: So, in that case, you weren't treated as a professional.
S: Well, no. There's one example. Get someone else. This is not my job to do your marking. I'm sorry buddy, if you're behind, that's not my fault. I did it all for him as best I could and here you go. "Come back again" Yeah, I bet you want me to come back.
R: That's really out of the ordinary. That may go to our last interview when we talk about benefits, wages all those things.
S: I couldn't believe it. Making up these stupid keys and marking all this stuff and recording all these things. I did it for two hours and it was almost all done. I thought "It would take two hours out of your time but you wouldn't be paying somebody do do. This is not my job." So I don't know. What do you do? Do you report them? Are they allowed to do that?
R: Um, no. In my opinion, no.
S: But you don't realize it's a half day. Shouldn't I be told when I get there?
R: My perception from the contract in this district is that you replace the teacher for that teacher's duties. It's not doing that stuff.
S: See, because I don't know what I would do. I'm here, I got up early to come here. It's like, it really mad me angry. What do I do? It's like do I tell him that he's a jerk and I don't even want to stay here for the rest of the day doing this stuff for you or do I just say OK, yeah, at least I'm getting paid and it's only marking. It's not a big deal. So, and you know, he had it all typed out. It's like you tell me you didn't realize I wouldn't be teaching before I came, that's bull. You did know otherwise you wouldn't have had time to type it. And if you realize in the morning, then you call the callboard (she's visibly angry). They called me at 6:30, they can call me by 7:30, I'm still home.
They say Look, it’s only a half day. OK. You know, if there has been a test and the teacher leaves a key and asks if I wouldn’t mind marking it, I wouldn’t mind marking that because most of the time, you’re sitting there doing nothing. I’d be more than happy to mark the test if they were writing a test that day. But, as for the other stuff, I don’t know...

R: So, looking at what we’ve done today, is there anything else you’d like to add or anything I’ve missed?

S: No, I don’t think so. No, I think it’s all there.

R: Thanks again. Maybe next time I do a study like this, we’ll keep journals.